

# *Broken Paths*

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Grace Keon





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"WHEN DID YOU GET THAT?" HE ASKED,  
POINTING TO HER RING

# BROKEN PATHS

By GRACE KEON *friend*

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"Not a Judgment—," "When Love is Strong."

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SENATOR INTERFERES

THE lad in brass buttons and livery jumped to his feet when Senator Hayden came in. Hayden was very popular with the youngsters at the Metropole.

"I'm not going to stay a second, Bob," said the stately old gentleman. "I'm looking for Mr. Travers."

"Oh, he's inside, sir. He's been inside all evening."

"Thank you, Bob. All right, then; take these." He handed over his hat and cane, brushed an imaginary speck from an immaculate coat-sleeve, and sauntered into the big, luxurious living-room that was the Metropole's chief attraction, and which helped to make this fashionable club a near-home. A chorus of greetings arose—evidently Senator Hayden's popularity extended farther than the foyer. He nodded and smiled cheerfully, his gray eyes roving from one face to the other. In the center of the room a comfortable chair had been drawn close to a table, and above the padded back rose a sleek black head, newspaper held high above it. Senator Hayden continued his pleasant progress until he stood behind the chair, but Malcolm Travers was too deeply



engrossed in his paper to notice him. So the Senator walked around and tapped him on the arm.

"Greetings, Malcolm!" he said. He sat on the edge of the table, one leg swinging, and when Malcolm would have risen to push a chair nearer, he shook his head. "Never mind—if you can give me just five minutes—"

"I can give you fifteen," said Malcolm Travers, genially. "I have an appointment with Kenneth Lister in just twenty. Until then I am absolutely at your service."

The tone was courteous, but the Senator frowned.

"I've warned you about Kenneth Lister, Malcolm," he said. "A fellow to let alone."

Lifted eyebrows and a half smile greeted this remark.

"Now, now," he said soothingly. "Dost realize little Malcolm has grown up?"

"Unfortunately. If he weren't—"

"Little Malcolm would get some trap-oil, eh?"

"Early and often, son."

"Sorry that you can't be accommodated, Senator! But it is a way that children have, alas! Ken Lister can't hurt me. I think Ken Lister's friends are rather deploring my influence over him. Yes," with a grin. "I bet you haven't looked at it like that have you? Poor little Kenny Lister!"

The Senator stared at him a moment, lips tightly closed, eyes scrutinizing.

"We won't discuss it any more. You know Lister is in bad odor. I wouldn't care, if I were in your shoes, to have my name associated with his. However, it's your affair—I didn't come to discuss Lister. I have something else on my mind."

"So!" Malcolm Travers reached down into his pocket and brought out a cigar case, holding it open, suggestively. "Have one?"

"No," said the Senator, gruffly, for he, too, was devoted to the weed. "I've gone the limit today."

"Ah! But you are right, at that. At your age one can't be too careful."

"At my age you'll be smoking—but not cigars," said the Senator, with some asperity.

"Whew!" The young man struck a match and puffed deeply. "You certainly have something on your mind!" He half closed his dark eyes. "Why not get it out and off, dear friend?"

Again that sharp glance from the older man.

"Since when have you and Joyce agreed to disagree?"

Malcolm Travers smoked quietly. Then:

"Have you heard that—*now*?"

"I heard it yesterday. Is it true?"

"Yes, it's true. Joyce and I have found out that

we are incompatible, and have separated by mutual consent."

"When?"

"Three months ago."

"Malcolm!"

Malcolm Travers shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the use, Senator? I tell you Joyce made up her mind—at last!—that the only heir of the house of Travers was an unsatisfactory matrimonial prospect."

"It looks bad—you've been engaged to be married for three years."

"Correct, Senator."

"You would have been married long ago only for that cursed cat of an Aunt Harriet. I know, I know! She ruined Joyce's mother's life—now she is ruining the girl's, too. I hoped you would stick it out, Malcolm."

Malcolm laughed—heartily enough.

"I was summarily dismissed," he said, "if that will give you any comfort in your present tribulations."

"But there's worse."

"I have no doubt. There's always worse. What's the rest of it?"

"You're engaged to Cecilia Emory."

"Again correct!"

"Does Cecilia know about Joyce?"

"Senator, my dear, dear friend, I haven't asked her!"



"Well, I'm going to."

"The deuce you are!" The young man's eyes opened wide, and he sat up straight in his chair.

"Say, look here, you certainly have your nerve—"

"Yes, I've my nerve," said the Senator imperturbably, "and I've got some idea of the fitness of things, too. For heaven's sake, Malcolm, think a bit before you cut into this. Cecilia Emory is about as fit to be your wife as an ant is fitted to be the wife of a butterfly. And with such a handicap as Joyce, too!"

"Now that's a darned fine simile! A butterfly and an ant make a good combination!"

"Perhaps not so good when I give the little ant an idea of what's before her—as well as what's behind her!"

"I don't want to be rude, Senator, really I don't," said the young man, "but I must remind you that this is my affair—my affair. The only thing that excuses you is your interest in my unworthy self. For surely you are not interested in Miss Emory?"

"I know the Emorys well—and little Cecil better," said Senator Hayden, passing over the obvious sarcasm, "and I can't say I have any use for the rest of the family. I positively dislike that sour cub of a brother. Cecilia isn't your style, Malcolm. You're good enough for—well, for Joyce. She knows all

about you, and will make allowances. You understand?"

"I take it," said Malcolm Travers, with a serene smile, "that if Senator Hayden had a daughter, the head of the house of Travers need not come a-knocking at the door."

"Rest assured of that. And I'd tell her why, too."

"Don't let your championship of—or your interference with—the affairs of the future Mrs. Malcolm Travers carry you too far, Senator." The young man's eyes blazed suddenly, and the other smiled.

"Pouf!" he said, with fine disdain. "I'd cane you before I'd quarrel with you, Malcolm. Good gracious, boy, what's come over you, mixing up with the Emorys? I might have known Chamberlin wouldn't hesitate at anything, and it's the Chamberlins who have made this possible. Paul is playing you finely—the whole lot of you—and why? Because he needs Tom Emory's money."

"So do I, Senator, so do I!" said the young man, and laughed.

"You're losing whatever sense of decency you possessed," said the Senator in disgust. "And for what? Money? Get out and earn it, if what your father left you isn't enough. I'll lend you all you need if you want more to start, and your brains and initiative will do the rest. It is all coming to you when I die, anyhow, Malcolm," he added, gravely.



"I DON'T WANT TO SEEM RUDE, BUT I MUST REMIND YOU  
THAT THIS IS MY AFFAIR"







"I have no desire, Senator, to step into a very healthy man's shoes," the young man said. "And, if you'll believe me, it isn't all Tom Emory's money. He's in a dandy scheme with Chamberlin and there's an agreement between Colin and myself that will sort of keep the money in the family. You won't have to complain of my inaction in a very short while—and certainly," he went on, in a softer tone, for the Senator's kind words had mollified his sudden rush of anger, "I'd never want to look forward to your demise."

Quick to note the change of manner the Senator bent nearer.

"Boy," he said "go to it—but leave Cecil out of it. Your father was the best friend I ever had. Do you remember the day you came home from college and stood beside his coffin? A young enthusiast, brawny of limb and lean of jaw, with a boy's eyes and a boy's soul, too. I've been sorry to see you lose the brightness of both, Malcolm. That's why I won't quarrel with you."

Malcolm Travers sat back in his chair and sighed.

"I wish I could be as unsophisticated at my age as you seem to be at yours." His voice was quite unmoved. "There are few of you left, and the rest of us might almost thank Providence for it. Do you know what you are talking about, anyhow?"

"Yes—I do. You've been engaged to marry Joyce

Moore. You love her and she loves you. And yesterday I heard it's broken off—and today I am told of your affair with Cecilia Emory. That's what I am talking about."

"Um...and add to that the Emorys have gone stark, staring mad over the 'alliance' as they choose to call it; even that sour cub, as you so politely designate a not altogether disagreeable member of my future family. The mother—the father—"

"Don't," said Senator Hayden, and this time indeed the note in his voice made his hearer wince. "The mother! The father! Oh, delight! And—Cecilia?"

And now Malcolm Travers was really angry.

"Say...what do you mean?"

"Don't you know they're pushing her into this, blindfolded?"

"She told you so—poor little Cecilia?"

"No."

"Then what? Is there some one else interested in your poor little Cecilia?" His hands clenched on the arms of the chair and his eyes snapped.

"I wish I could truthfully say yes," said the Senator. "I can't. Haven't you eyes in your head? What sport is there in hunting a scared rabbit?"

"Senator Hayden, I warn you—and for the last time: mind your own business!"

"Cecilia Emory is my business. I've known her all her life. I've talked to you fair and square, for your good and hers. You're spoiling your future—loving one girl and marrying another. You are going to make a sweet little creature unhappy. Cecilia Emory and the Chamberlins!" He laughed. "I've had my say to you, and I'm satisfied. Now I'll have my say to her father and mother and herself, if necessary. I'm going to act the part of a friend, whether you like it or not."

"On the principle that this blow hurts me more than it can you! Well, go ahead! When the invitation list is made out I'll see that your name heads it—because of your tender interest."

"Thank you, Malcolm. I shall appreciate that." He stood up, a slender, immaculate figure, erect of bearing as a young man, his keen eyes under their heavy brows as clear as a boy's. "So you're going into business with old Tom Emory? Excellent! *That* would have pleased your father, Malcolm."

"'An honest man's the noblest work of God,' Senator."

"So he is! And God must be shocked at the degradation of some of His handiwork. However, you may prove useful...after training."

Malcolm Travers laughed.

"Dear Senator, I'm not for use. They are buying me for an ornament," he said, and the serenity



of his tone was undisturbed. "And now we'll drop the subject, please? Lister hovers in the background."

"I'm going." The Senator turned. "Allow me to wish you a very good night." He moved on as Kenneth Lister approached, saluting Malcolm jovially.

"What have you been feeding the benevolent old gentleman, Malcolm?" asked he. "He gave me a look that withered my soul."

"Never mind the Senator, Ken," said Travers, easily.

"Baiting you again eh?"

"I said never mind the Senator, Ken."

"Oh, all right. Apologize!"

"Hang that fellow!" muttered the Senator, under his trim gray mustache, as he walked the length of the room, being greeted and returning greetings as he went. "I'd be much better off if I washed my hands of him. Kenneth Lister! Puppy! That association will do absolutely no good. Joyce ought to—Joyce! Yes...Joyce..." His eyebrows met. "Playing at life...and to bring little Cecil Emory into it! Little Cecil, of all people! Confound Paul Chamberlin and his ambitions and his whole crowd!"

Bob was waiting with hat and gloves and cane—for which service Senator Hayden made fair exchange; then he was off and down the street, a man

to attract attention anywhere. But his thoughts were racing.

No business of his? Of course it wasn't. That was where the harm lay—nothing was anyone's business in this world. A case now of exchange and barter, and Cecilia stood about as much show as a canary. He had indeed known the Emorys a long while. Whatever had happened, Malcolm and Joyce were out, and Travers was giving his name and pedigree and standing in that circle within the circle—for whose good? Cecil's? Cecil would never fit. Tom Emory's? All Tom Emory's money could never buy his way in. Mrs. Emory...ah, there it was! Elizabeth Garvan Emory! What a pity the thing couldn't be arranged without Cecil. Oh, he knew! The door had been opened...it still stood open. Cecil's marriage would mean that it was closed...and bolted with Cecil's family on the coveted inside.

"Nevertheless," thought the Senator, again, with the courage that was his habit, "I've had my word with Travers, and I'll have it with the Emorys." His mouth set grimly. "Better not take time to think it over—better not." He might begin to argue against himself...Elizabeth Garvan Emory! He recalled the name, signed to a recent dinner invitation in a sprawling hand...on irreproachable paper...And he remembered Bessie Garvan very well. He had known her and Tom many years ago...and he had often



commended the rare prize Tom had won—an ambitious wife! A woman who stood behind her husband in everything...made his interests hers...Much, if not all, of Tom Emory's rise in the world could be credited to Bessie Garvan. And she had not changed—only in name! Elizabeth Garvan Emory!

He became aware just then that somebody—a young man—was walking abreast of him. He looked around casually, and recognized him.

“How do you do, Colin?” His mouth puckered. Colin Emory had that effect on him.

“Very well, Senator. Just walking, or going to the house?”

“Both...if your father and mother are at home.”

“I think they are. At least I haven't heard that there's anything on for tonight.” He drew a little nearer until they were side by side. There was no love lost on the young man's part, either, but he was not unmindful of the fact that it gave one a certain standing to be seen with Senator Douglas Hayden.

“How is Cecilia?” asked the older man.

“Well enough, I fancy.” He said “fawncy” and the Senator could have choked him. “I haven't seen much of her lately. Too much excitement in the air.”

“Um...yes?” The Senator was mildly interested. “Anything going on?”

“Why...of course you've heard?”

"Oh, some one said something about Cecilia and Malcolm Travers. All nonsense, of course. People are fond of talking."

"This isn't talk...it's truth."

"Ah? Just so!" A bit of the sourness crept like acid into the Senator's voice. "The marriage will take place—when?"

"That hasn't been decided, but I suppose the date will be set within the next few days. Cecil, like all girls, doesn't want to be hurried——"

"Um...well, he's an expensive acquisition. But I guess your father can afford it."

The grim sarcasm was not lost on Colin Emory. He colored. If, a moment since, the Senator could have choked him, he now wanted very much to choke the Senator.

"Cecil has had something to do with it, too," he answered briefly.

"Precious little," said the Senator disagreeably.

"Seen Travers?" asked Colin.

"Yes. This evening."

Colin's eyebrows met in an unmistakable frown, and there was no further word spoken until they reached the Emory house, a substantial building overlooking the Park.

Young Emory opened the door, and ushered the Senator into a handsomely furnished living-room.

Behind it was the library, perfectly equipped, and the doors, open between, gave a splendid view of high ceilings and wide arches, with a shimmer of green growing things in the rear. A slightly sardonic smile touched the Senator's mouth. He had never rightly looked at the Emory setting before but the contrast between the old and the new was strong on him at the present moment.

He was not long alone, however. A tall and graceful woman came in almost immediately. The likeness between herself and her son was very apparent. Her hair was coal-black, her eyes large and dark, like his, the nose prominent and well-shaped, the lips firm, with a slight cleft to the chin, without which the whole face would have been very severe.

"Senator Hayden! Why, I'm delighted to see you!" she exclaimed. There was unmistakable pleasure in her tones as she held out her hand, which he shook warmly. A handsome woman, a creditable woman, he thought, a dominant woman, clever as the deuce. . . as unlike Cecilia as the day is unlike night. And Senator Hayden thought Cecilia Emory perfection.

"I've come to have a chat with you—with both of you," he said. "Where's Tom?"

"Tom? In his room, I am certain." She beamed. "I'll send for him." She touched a bell and a maid

appeared. "Ask Mr. Emory to come down an instant. Senator Hayden is calling."

"A nice, quiet, comfortable chat between three mature people, with no nonsense and no frills," continued the gray-haired gentleman. "And," he added, as an afterthought, "I've heard of the engagement."

Something like relief flashed over the lady's face.

"Oh! So Malcolm has told you? Well, I suppose we must forgive him—"

"How does Cecil take it?" he interrupted.

"Cecil, dear child! How oddly you said that, Senator Hayden!" She smiled. "We are dining alone this evening. Are you free, and dare I invite you? You can see for yourself how Cecil is taking it."

He gave a deprecating glance at his sleeve, and her hand went up, protesting.

"We shall not mind—you are too old a friend to stand on ceremony—"

"No, thank you. Really, you are too good. But I have an engagement."

"That is unfortunate for the Emorys." She laughed gaily. Senator Hayden marveled at her. She was wonderful. Her manner was correct, her poise perfect. Bessie Garvan! Admiration stirred him anew. Why, he had never met such a woman,



never! If only poor little Cecilia were more like her mother the marriage might not seem so ghastly. And then Thomas Emory entered.

He was not quite as tall as his wife, and very much stouter, sandy of hair, and with a pair of small greenish-gray eyes, very keen and sharp behind thick glasses, sandy brows and lashes and a sandy beard, struggling now in the making of a dignified Van Dyke; in general appearance, a prosperous business man. Clever, too, but impulsive and quick. Mrs. Emory supplied the needed caution. In a pleasant voice, which a touch of brogue made pleasanter, he greeted the visitor, advancing with hand outstretched, and Senator Hayden met him half-way.

"Our friend has heard of Cecil's engagement—naturally Malcolm would tell him first—and has, I presume, dropped in to present his felicitations. It is awfully kind of you," she added, with a laughing glance of her dark eyes.

Senator Hayden looked at Tom Emory. He, too, had changed. Tremendously. Well, with a wife like Elizabeth Garvan Emory, old Tom might even be induced to expatriate himself. . . . no, he'd take that back! That was one thing Tom Emory would never do—buy a title.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, calmly, "but I am not here on any errand of felicitation! I came, rather, to see if it could possibly be true, and



I'd like to talk to Cecil herself about it. Where is she?"

"Cecil?" Mrs. Emory's slender white fingers curled about the top of the chair, and she gave the Senator an odd glance. He was a queer man—had done queer things. Tom Emory looked at him also, but his face was absolutely blank. No one could tell what Tom Emory's thoughts were, for all his expression lay in his small eyes, and the thick glasses concealed them. "I suppose—as usual—she is resting in her room, before dinner. And I'm sorry, but we don't quite understand, Senator Hayden."

"Well, you will," he said.

"Has Mr. Travers sent you? I thought we had arranged—"

Senator Hayden straightened proudly.

"I don't know what your arrangements are with Malcolm Travers," he said. "I hope you are not paying for him according to his own valuation, or you'll wreck your fortune. Sit down, Tom—and you, too, Elizabeth." And when they were seated he continued in softer tones. "Now let's all get off our high horses and come to level ground. I'm talking straight from the shoulder—to both of you. And I'd like to see less of Thomas Emory, millionaire, and a little more of good old Tom Emory, truck-and-longshoreman, who helped send me to Washington twenty-eight years ago!"

"Senator Hayden! For Heaven's sake!" Mrs. Emory glanced about her apprehensively.

"Oh, I know! I suppose we're safe here, or I wouldn't talk, and you two are well aware I'm not the man to talk anywhere else. You know what you were before that little cogwheel invention of yours, Tom, made your fortune. I don't want to remind you that it was my belief and my backing that started things in earnest—now, never mind! The credit is yours, I'm taking none at all—I considered it then—and now—a privilege. And I also exact another privilege, for while you deserve credit, let me say right here you've made an insufferable prig of Colin. . . . And there's Cecilia."

The two were silent, staring at him.

"Little Cecilia," he added, in a softer tone. "There isn't a thing in the world can spoil her but this marriage. It will ruin her whole life. And that's what I've come here to say."

"Then you'll pardon me for telling you that you are interfering unwarrantably," said Mrs. Emory, with flashing eyes. "What we do with our own is our own business."

"That's true. What you do with your own! Why don't you try to settle Colin's life affairs for him?"

Mrs. Emory made an inarticulate sound in her throat.

"Because he wouldn't let you," said Senator Hay-

den coldly. "But he, and both of you, are willing to use Cecil as a stepping-stone to the social success you now crave. And it's all such a lot of—such a lot of," he swallowed hard, and it did not take much imagination to supply the adjective, "—— nonsense," he finished.

Mrs. Emory laughed softly.

"You speak as if we were marrying Cecil to some monster," she said.

"Do I?" asked Senator Hayden.

"Don't you know that she is very much in love with Malcolm Travers? And very happy in the anticipation of a brilliant wedding? Do you dream, Senator Hayden," she went on, with a flash of her white teeth, "that we would force our little girl into anything repulsive to her?"

"Rot!" said Senator Hayden. "Doesn't your common sense tell you that Cecil will never be happy in such a loveless marriage? You know all about Joyce Moore."

A mask seemed to shut down over Mrs. Emory's face.

"Joyce Moore?" she echoed. "What about—Joyce Moore?"

"Malcolm Travers has been engaged to her for three years. He has broken with her to enter into another compact with Cecil. Joyce is of his own world, of his own kind. She loves him. He loves

her as much as he is capable of loving. What then? Cecil deserves better than this!"

Mrs. Emory's eyes met his. They were hard as flint.

"Malcolm implied that he had a few enemies," she remarked.

The Senator rose.

"My errand is done" he said. "I have warned you. If Cecil doesn't love him, she's going to have trouble. If she does love him, she's going to have misery. I know Malcolm. Go ahead. Marry Cecil to him—I wish you joy of your son-in-law."

And without waiting for either of them to reply, he left the room and the house.



## CHAPTER II

### CECILIA HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

THE Emory family met that night after dinner. Mrs. Emory, though her husband had acquired his wealth within the last two decades, had learned by heart the lesson of luxurious simplicity. She was plainly attired in black, a color she affected, with a touch of vivid scarlet by way of contrast, and this hint of color seemed to go well with her dead-white skin and splendid eyes. She had a slender, almost girlish figure and there was not a thread of gray in her raven hair. Though she was tall, her handsome son Colin towered a head above her. Well-built, well-groomed, he was a young man hard to classify. If he had any heart he never showed it. Sentiment he detested. He loved all the good things of life, and was more than interested in the niceties that made it a comfortable thing. He was a fair sportsman, hunted, kept a yacht, and was now trying to interest his father in blooded horses.

Unfortunately, as so often happens in acquiring money, the Emorys had lost the simplicity of the Faith. They were still Catholics, in a half-hearted way. They did not deny their religion, but with the exception of Cecilia, the only daughter, and convent-bred, they did not openly profess it. To Colin,



religious practices were a bore. Tom Emory had grown careless a few years following his coming to America. Elizabeth Emory went to mass occasionally and made every possible excuse not to go. When her children were young they served. Now it was the weather or indisposition or fear of indisposition. She was more than generous in subscriptions to all good works, but not at all generous when it came to personal inconvenience. Had it been possible to buy a substitute she would gladly have paid the price. For, after all, a baptized Catholic may forget his religion—and banish all thought of it—but there are hours when conscience pricks. And these pricks surely and certainly annoyed Mrs. Thomas Emory. Her husband had few such qualms, she thought—men take things so much easier than women. And Colin? Well, Colin was the brilliant graduate of a non-Catholic University, and he discoursed on all religions with the air of a sage and the vanity of a young man of his type who desires above all things that his world shall rate him well. “Catholics? Oh, yes, we are Catholics! But I think you will find us very liberal in our views! There is so much good in every religion!”

Step by step the Emory family had moved up in the scale, as Senator Hayden could testify. But it was Tom Emory’s connection with Paul Chamberlin that had at last opened the magic door of Mrs. Emory’s secret ambition, and it was when stepping

over the threshold that the Emory family had encountered Malcolm Travers. Tom Emory met him first in a business way—then socially. The blasé young man's evident interest in Cecilia as a new type, had sent a faint thrill through the mother's breast. And immediately Elizabeth Garvan Emory began to plan—that Elizabeth Garvan Emory whom Senator Hayden anathematized. With Cecilia married to this man there was no height to which she might not aspire. Even Tom Emory was enthused, seeing himself the focus of such business dealings as he had not yet had opportunity to handle!

As for Colin he had at once and almost absurdly fallen in love with Muriel Carter, who was Mrs. Paul Chamberlin's sister. He was not at all averse to any plans that meant future prestige, and he realized that if Cecilia married Malcolm Travers his position with Muriel Carter would be assured.

The Emorys were neither vulgar nor pretentious, though thus rooted in ambition. The mother had seen to that, and her serene success had given them confidence, always with that one exception—Cecilia. Unfortunately, decided those who met the girl, she was stupid. Fortunately, her mother said, with confidence, she was beautiful. Not pretty, not fascinating, but beautiful with a child's fresh loveliness though she was in her twenty-second year. It was her appealing, childish beauty that had made Senator Hayden her slave. She had been well educated, but with eyes

like purple violets and hair the rare and gleaming gold that is seldom seen save on a baby's head, who cared what that head contained? No one had ever tried to find out, and trained as she had been Cecilia Emory went the even tenor of her way, gentle, agreeable, anxious to please those she loved and never finding it necessary even to contradict her proud and ambitious mother. She had tried it several times after her homecoming, but the results had frightened her. In the matter of her engagement to Malcolm Travers, she had seen no objection to his proposal. He was handsome, clever. Why marry him? There were four reasons why she should, her father's, her mother's, her brother's approval—and the young man's own preference for her.

Unfortunately, neither Cecilia nor her parents realized that Life had not bloomed for the girl. She was like a bud tightly enclosed in its sheath of green, protected and uncaring. Of the two, Malcolm Travers was really more interested in the mother. She had brains, he told himself, and it would be a good game to stand behind her as she began the last ascent of her journey to the top. He knew quite well all she would have to endure, but in his conversation with her after he had spoken of his regard for Cecilia, he caught more than a glimpse of the iron in her makeup. It pleased him mightily.

Father, mother and brother were seated at the table when Cecilia entered the dining-room, moving



with quiet step and taking her accustomed place. She came and went like that, unobtrusively, gently, brief of speech, unassuming, intensely reserved. Even now she said nothing, though she had not seen them, with the exception of her mother, all that day. When she first came back from college she had kissed them on entering, but she soon found out that that evidence of affection embarrassed them, and so it ceased. She was of medium height, and had evidently inherited her fairness from her father's side of the house, as Colin had inherited his mother's dark eyes and hair. To the Emory family their daughter was an asset, in so far as her beauty made friends for them, but each and every one of them looked upon her as a nonentity, colorless, vague, pliant, yielding. And Elizabeth Emory, strong as steel, wondered what Malcolm Travers saw in this softly-spoken girl of hers, for all her loveliness.

Now, before beginning her meal, she quietly made the Sign of the Cross. It was Senator Hayden who had insisted, in spite of the fact that he was not a Catholic, that Cecilia should be sent to the Ursulines. Not for any religious reason did Mrs. Emory consent to this, but she desired, then, to please the Senator more than anything else, for she had her foot on the first rung of the ladder and he could help her up. Cecilia had taken few honors, but she was well grounded in the essentials, had passed creditably enough and was especially well informed in the



doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. When she had returned a year previous—a girl of twenty-one—Mrs. Emory commented on the practice of beginning and ending each meal with the sign of salvation.

“Better get out of the habit, Cecil,” she advised. “If you want to say grace, say it to yourself quietly. It is all right when we are here alone, but it might be embarrassing at another table.” Later, she remonstrated again, and sharply. It had happened—at another table. Excellent people, too, that the Emorys were eager to propitiate.

“It looks so—vulgar,” said Mrs. Emory; “like a parade of one’s religion.”

The large violet eyes met hers deprecatingly.

“It’s such a habit, Mother,” she said. “I’ve been so accustomed to it.”

Mrs. Emory sighed.

“Don’t be stupid, Cecil!” This was Colin’s contribution, but Cecil only raised her shoulders.

And again the mother spoke, and several times thereafter. But Cecilia smiled, faintly, a shadow over her eyes. Her mother could decide the colors she should wear, even the man she should marry, but in this —It would, perhaps, have astonished Mrs. Emory had she realized that this habit was Cecilia’s act of faith in herself—the link that bound her to the girl she desired to be, rather than the girl her mother

wished to make of her. Presently the household became accustomed to this simple grace before and after meals, though occasionally, when worried over other matters, the mother checked her raspingly. And once indeed, in a fit of abstraction, the father had raised his hand to his forehead, following Cecilia's example unconsciously. It seemed such a natural thing to do! His wife's wide, horrified gaze interrupted the completion of the blessed sign. He did not repeat the error.

"Why didn't you make Senator Hayden stay for dinner?" Colin now enquired.

"He had an engagement," answered Mrs. Emory quickly. "He was very sorry too—on one of our free evenings! You know he does prefer to dine with the family."

Colin raised his eyebrows. His mother's absolutely correct manner annoyed him, just as absence of it would have made him hotly angry. Colin was an important young man, whose moods had to be considered.

"Senator Hayden is a bit of an epicure," he said. "If you had told him the name of your cook, perhaps—"

"Colin, don't be absurd!" smiled Mrs. Emory.

Cecilia looked at her father.

"I am sorry I did not see Senator Hayden," she said.

"He is very interesting," said Mrs. Emory.

"Too darned interesting," grumbled Colin. "He's interested too much. Thinks he can go around the world giving good advice."

"My dear boy! A man of his experience—"

Colin growled.

"I suppose he got it by being foolish in his youth," he said. "He should let a few others gain wisdom the same way."

Mrs. Emory made no comment on this, nor did the father. Both of them knew Colin too well to suspect him of any harum-scarum tendencies. Colin had both eyes fixed on the future too securely to jeopardize it.

There was little sparkle of wit and flow of soul here at any time. Dinner was soon over.

"Let us have our coffee now," said Colin. "I'm to meet Ennis at nine, so I want to get away." He rose as soon as he had finished. Mr. Emory went into the living-room—Mrs. Emory also, bringing some lace work in a handsome little basket.

Cecilia rose, but did not leave directly. Instead, she stood looking down at the table, her hand resting on the back of the chair, a dubious expression on her fair face. She followed them, then, closing the door of the living-room carefully behind her, and Mrs. Emory glanced complacently at the slender figure in its white gown. How fortunate it was that Cecilia was so lovely—so lovely that she needed no artificial



aid to render her attractive. Luckily the child had this real beauty, because—well—not even to herself would Mrs. Emory acknowledge that she thought her daughter stupid—and never would she realize that the only refuge for a diffident nature is silence. Standing with her back to the door, her eyes dark, her cheeks flushed, the girl looked at her father first, and then at her mother, her mouth compressed a little. It was a charming, home-like picture; the portly, comfortable man ensconced in a portly, comfortable chair; the slender woman, her hands moving swiftly, delicately. Cecilia walked through to the library, took up a book and came out again, rubbing her finger over the gilt top. Neither her father nor her mother noticed her. She drew a small chair forward between them, and sat down.

“I wish,” she said, in a quiet voice, “that you had let me see Senator Hayden.”

Mr. Emory paid no attention. Mrs. Emory replied but did not glance up.

“He could not stay,” she said. “There was no earthly excuse to send for you.”

“I think,” said Cecil, “that there was.”

“My dear child! You can see him any time.”

“Well...I am very fond of him.”

“So am I,” Mrs. Emory agreed, but she frowned. “Very fond. But once in a while he presumes on long friendship, Cecil.”



"Did he presume this evening?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Emory, a little sharply, "he did."

Again Cecil passed one small finger over the gold top of her book.

"I was in the library," she said.

"Oh?" Mrs. Emory put down her work and looked at her daughter. "You—were in the library?"

"Yes. The doors were open. I was in the alcove. I think I was... asleep. Your voices woke me."

Mrs. Emory shrugged her shoulders and picked up the lace, counting the stitches. "You know all about it, then, my dear."

"I do" said Cecil. A fleeting smile touched her mouth. "I do," she repeated, "and I heard enough. I have decided... and I hope you won't be too annoyed... that I am not going to marry Malcolm Travers."

There was no aggressiveness, no emotion of any kind. A simple statement. Mrs. Emory laughed.

"Silly baby! Don't talk nonsense, my child."

Cecil stood up.

"Will you write him tonight? Or shall I? I prefer not to see him again until... until he understands."

"Cecilia!" Mrs. Emory shot the word at the girl, throwing her lace on the table. "Come back here this moment. Would you dare to let a whim—a notion—"

"You can say I do not know him well enough—or care enough—or something like that," continued the girl. "I thought you'd rather. You can say it so much nicer than I." She put her chair back with an air of finality, and Mrs. Emory, speechless, watched her as she crossed the room. When the girl's hand rested on the knob, she recovered her senses and put her hand across the table, shaking her husband's arm vigorously.

"Tom! Do you hear what she is saying? Do you?"

Mr. Emory made a frantic grasp for the newspaper thus rudely shaken from his hand, and his glasses followed it. He recovered both from the floor and sat up testily. Cecilia turned, waiting.

"Cecil says she is not going to marry Malcolm Travers."

"What's that, what's that? What's that you're driving at?" He spoke to the girl and she answered him.

"I won't marry him," she said.

There was a long-drawn breath from Mrs. Emory—almost a hiss. She raised her hand.

"Come back, Cecil. Come back here and sit down. My dear child, what has got into you?"

A little sigh escaped the girl's lips, as if the matter bored her. She came back, however, just as she had

gone on, brought forward the chair and sat down, her arms folded across the volume she still held.

"I'm sorry, but I don't care for him," she remarked.

"Ah!" Mrs. Emory's ejaculation was one of relief. "Thank heaven! I thought you had a real reason."

"But I have," protested Cecil gently. "Excepting that I'd rather you'd use the one I'm giving you and not bother with the other."

"I want the bother, Cecil," said Mrs. Emory, in a quiet tone. "No, Tom," as her husband opened his mouth for what was evidently meant to be a sharp retort. "We must listen; it's only right that we should. In turn, Cecil will listen to us. Yes, dear?"

Cecilia inclined her head.

"Yes," she answered, "only there's nothing you can say."

"My little girl, I am really worried. Please tell me—"

"All right, then, mother. I went shopping this afternoon."

"Yes?"

"In the store I met Glad Evans. We were chatting when she said: 'Do you know that tall girl in black standing before the mirror?' I did not. Just then she caught sight of Glad Evans and came over. She had been away to Hot Springs with her aunt—had just got home." Cecilia unlocked her arms and put the book on her lap, opening and shutting it abstractedly.

"She was such a *lovely* girl, so tall and proud-looking, but her smile was so sweet that I felt I could love her. Gladys introduced her, but when she heard my name—'Miss Emory—Miss Cecilia Emory,' she seemed to freeze, and nodding to Gladys, walked away. I never saw such a change. Even Gladys was surprised.

" 'But you musn't mind her abruptness,' she said.  
" 'It's only natural.'

" 'She looked at me as if she hated me,' I said.

" 'She does,' said Gladys Evans."

Cecilia caught her breath quickly.

" 'But I never saw her before in my life.'

" 'Of course not,' said Gladys. 'She's been away . . . and she hasn't got over it; that is why she showed it so plainly.'

" 'Got over what?' I asked, but Gladys laughed at me.

" 'Don't pretend, Cecil; that's Joyce Moore.' "

Cecilia was staring at the lamp now, her hands crossed quietly.

"I couldn't go on questioning, but I meant to ask you. Then, in the library I heard Senator Hayden—"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Emory. "Senator Hayden!" She shrugged her shoulders. "Such gossip! Such talk! Pay no attention to it, Cecil. You are too sensitive."

"I am quite satisfied the way I am," said the girl cheerfully, "so we won't change anything."



Mrs. Emory stared straight at her.

"Does not the greatest possible triumph of a woman appeal to you?"

"In what way?"

"You have taken Malcolm Travers from one of the most beautiful girls in the city."

A dull color swept over Cecilia's face, smarted her eyes, burned her forehead.

"Mother!"

An uneasy feeling crossed Mrs. Emory's mind. . . . But . . . little Cecilia?

"My dear, it may sound brutal, but it is true."

"Malcolm Travers would marry Joyce Moore . . . only for Father's money."

"Is that all you have against him?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Emory laughed.

"This is the twentieth century, Cecil, not the eighteenth. You must trust your father and mother to know what is best for you."

"But *that* is eighteenth century, Mother."

Another odd sensation—could it be alarm?—stirred within the older woman.

"At any rate, your word is given," she said decisively. "The engagement is being announced, and Malcolm will expect you to set an early date for the wedding. I would advise you to make it just as

early as you can—in decency,” she added, with significance.

“Oh!” said Cecilia. Then: “I may—lose him?”

“Exactly. And where would you—or any other girl I know, for that matter—find another like him? Handsome, aristocratic, amiable, and with a pedigree that goes back heaven only knows how far—”

A curious little smile touched the corners of Cecilia’s mouth.

“What is it?”

“You will not...like it, Mother.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“Why—I have often heard Colin describe horses...so. And...I’m not buying a horse, Mother.”

Never had Mrs. Emory experienced such a shock. She could not believe her ears.

“Heaven defend me from a smart daughter,” she said. Her voice was cold and Cecilia shivered. “We’ll not discuss this any more,” she continued. “You’re going to marry Malcolm Travers. I have heard no objection to him before this, and if he likes you better than he does Joyce Moore—”

“But he doesn’t, Mother. The Senator—”

“Silly old fool! And a politician! Don’t forget that! Who knows why he does a thing? Personally, you have no objection to Malcolm Travers?”

“None. He is most courteous. But I will not—”

"And think what it means to us all—to Colin and to you. For ourselves—your father and mother—you need care little. We are not going to live forever, Cecil, and it is my ambition to see you in the position which you can surely attain if you are guided aright now. Do you think we would allow you to contract a marriage with this man if we thought you would be unhappy?"

Cecilia did not reply.

"You are a good child," her mother continued, "and a great comfort to us, my darling. We'll have no more of this, ever. Another person's affairs are nothing to you—why mix up in them? Malcolm Travers' life begins the day you marry him—all other things are left behind. This talk is but envy and jealousy. Not even Gladys Evans is free from it."

"Don't you trust *anyone*, Mother?" asked the girl.

"Outside my own family—no!" said the mother, with a grim expression about her mouth. "You'll learn that lesson, too."

"I don't want to learn it," said Cecil. "And all you say about motives and other things may be true, but the fact is also true that Malcolm Travers broke his engagement of three years' standing to marry . . . Father's money. Give him Father's money, if you like, but I do not go with it."

Oh, so quietly, so deprecatingly, she spoke; so

gently, poor little Cecilia! The woman's fingers clenched. Thorough exasperation possessed her.

"Tom," she said, turning on her husband, "how can you have patience with this absurd girl?"

The father, though he had been seemingly intent on his paper, had lost not a single word of the conversation.

"What can I say, Elizabeth," he asked bluntly, "but repeat your words? She is not willing to help either of us—or herself. She is repaying us with ingratitude for all that we have lavished on her."

Cecilia's lips trembled. She rose, put her chair back once more, slid her book into the crook of her arm, and turned back, with her hand on the knob.

"I am sorry," she said, "but I shall not marry Malcolm Travers."

Those words were the embodiment of a desire that was to become overwhelming. For almost a year and a half she had sunk herself, as it were, in the personality of another. Perhaps, she thought now, it was not yet too late.



## CHAPTER III

### POOR LITTLE CECIL

THE air in the Emory household the next morning was almost purple, if depressing atmospheres may be expressed in shades. In her own room, Cecilia had hesitated at the thought of going downstairs. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to avoid, but in her quiet and calm method of ordering her quiet and calm existence Cecilia had had one standing formula: *Do the disagreeable thing first*. If she did not meet her father at the breakfast table, she would worry over his reception of her at night. So she made the plunge.

Mrs. Emory came down, too, looking strained and unhappy, as Cecilia noted to her dismay. Before the meal was over the mother returned to her room, not unmindful of the effect this would have on the sensitive girl. Colin was still ignorant of his sister's mad decision and Mrs. Emory intended that he should remain so. She meant to dig out the idea, root and branch, from Cecilia's mind at once, and never, never should Malcolm Travers know that such treason against her most cherished plans had ever been uttered! Elizabeth Garvan Emory meant to marry her two children not only well but brilliantly. Cecilia's

marriage assured Colin's, and woe betide any man, woman or thing that interfered with her ambition. The iron will that had polished that rough diamond, Thomas Emory, that had carried him through poverty to competence and from competence to affluence, that had won—oh, a much harder task!—his observance of the “niceties” of living, so that he might be proud of himself as a “self-made man” anywhere and at any time, was set now against the meekness and gentleness of a girl who had always been like pliant wax in her hands.

The father did not speak to Cecilia during the meal. When it was finished he rose from the table and went out into the hall, where, after some hesitation, Cecilia followed him. She was affectionate, and her father, at least, had never repulsed her. But now, though she stood timidly near him while he was getting into his light overcoat, he still said nothing, and when she would have lifted her face for his kiss, he pushed her away. But with his foot on the threshold, he changed his mind. After all the girl was his daughter, and that nonsensical notion of hers—

“Girlie,” he said, coming back to her and putting his arm around her, while Alfred, the butler, stood discreetly aside, “you just promise me something—not much—only think it over for a day or two? Eh? Remember that? Think it over! Your mother is

dreadfully upset, and well she may be. Keep up the family pride, Cecil. Be a good sport. Look what it means for you and for your brother Colin, too. It's only once in a thousand years that such a chance comes to a girl—"

"You mean—"

"I mean that the Travers and the Emorys don't mix—not in this world," he added.

Her grave eyes seemed to look through him.

"I—appreciate the fact," she said slowly. "Oh, yes. But it isn't that so much. It's honor—a man's honor—my honor. He gives up the girl he loves to marry me, because you are my father, because of your *money*! Oh, what a shame!"

"Honor!" laughed Tom Emory, showing his large, white teeth in a contemptuous smile. "My honor is my bank account, Cecil—and it's going to be yours, too. Oh, I've been taught that! Honor doesn't butter parsnips, as Malcolm Travers knows. Had I been as scrupulous as you are, Miss Cecilia Emory would be somebody's stenographer today, instead of a little beauty wrapped in sables. Now you go in to your dear, good, sensible mother and have a chat with her, and think over what she has to say to you. Honor! Stuff and nonsense!" His arms enfolded her, and she was caught up in a close bear-hug as he kissed her affectionately. In turn she put her cheek against his—a soft, babyish cheek, and her hands



met about his neck, strongly, lovingly. An odd feeling crept over Tom Emory. She was such a little thing . . . what if . . . He shook it off at once. All rot!

"Come and tell me what you've decided and—if it's right, and it must be!—you and I will go to Drake's together. The sky is the limit, little sweetheart, even if it's a diamond tiara for that golden crown of yours!"

That was the real honor, then—the power of money? Cecilia stood looking after the portly figure going down the steps, at the luxurious car at the curb, with the man standing beside it, two fingers to cap. There was a style even in a salutation that must be observed. Honor! Your honor is your bank account! He waved his hand to her. She could not see in the blur of tears to wave in return; for her thoughts had flown back to one memorable day. Words sounded in her ears that had been deeply impressed upon her heart and her mind: "You can't walk straight on a crooked road; you can't think straight with a crooked mind; you can't love God with a crooked heart."

They had been talking of the straight road and temptation, and Mother Philippa, sauntering around the maple path at the back of the big convent, had said that among many other wise little things. But those words Cecil took and kept for her own. Just



as surely as it it wound before her, she realized that she would set her feet on a crooked road indeed if she carried out the desires of her father and mother. And, in her anxiety to obey, to please, she had not thought at all of the man who was to be her husband, save that she liked him in a friendly fashion, that he was gentle, courteous and—even yet she knew so little of life that she could not understand that this was his chief attraction for her—indifferent. A light pressure of his lips on her cheek, on her fingers, her forehead, and Cecilia was content. She would have abhorred him as a lover, but she did not know that.

“When she had decided—” She glanced at the clock. It still lacked ten minutes of the hour. She could reach church before the eight o’clock mass began, and with fingers that trembled she crushed her little hat down on her head.

“If Mother should want me, will you tell her I have gone to St. Paul’s?” she said, and the man nodded. It would have surprised Cecil had she known Alfred’s unspoken comment: “Poor little kid! She stands about as much chance with this bunch as a snowball in Africa!”

When mass was over she knelt for some time, her beads between her fingers. Things mattered so little, after all, kneeling here, gathering courage here from the Source of courage, strength from the Source of strength—where courage and strength are given with-

out stint or measure. And there Cecil made her plan. It called for both virtues. She would not step on a crooked road, though it made her mother an empress!

When she returned home she stood at the telephone an instant, her hand on the receiver. Then remembering that it connected with her mother's room, she decided not to chance that. Instead, she called Peggy, her little maid, and sent her on an errand. It was well for Mrs. Emory, lying in her darkened chamber with nerves that throbbed and ached, that she did not know what this message was. For Peggy had taken a note to Senator Hayden and delivered it into the hands of Senator Hayden's own man, Peter. And Peter was fond of Peggy.

"Listen, Peg," he said. "The Senator's been bad all night. He's had a smothering attack, and I got Dr. McDonald at daybreak for him. He's asleep now—but as soon as he wakes—"

That was the word that bright-eyed little Peggy brought back to her young mistress, and it caused Cecilia some concern. She hoped that Peter would not meddle with the note; then she remembered Senator Hayden's absolute trust in the man, and felt better. Besides, she had often called on him—of course not by messenger before, but wasn't that her privilege? All this she told herself to quiet the uneasiness that was beginning to torment her. She *must* see him. He alone had the key to this puzzle, and

on his word to her would hang her future conduct. And yet it was an innocent little note.

"Dear Senator Hayden: Mother is in bed with a bad headache and will probably be there all morning. If you are out before noon will you call for me and invite me to drive or walk with you?"

"Always,

"Cecil."

That was all. But Mrs. Emory would not have thought it so simple as it appeared to be.

The answer to it came in the person of Senator Hayden himself, correct as ever, stately, and with firm step, though Peter could have told of how he had to drag himself from his couch in reply to Cecilia's appeal. "Yes, and if I knew I'd drop dead ten minutes afterward, I'd go, Peter," he had said to the man who remonstrated with him. He asked for Mrs. Emory, but his card was brought to Cecilia and she went to him immediately. In his most formal accents he related that he had been passing and thought Cecilia would like to drive with him to keep him company. "And I'll buy you peanuts," he added facetiously.

"I did *not* expect the peanuts," said Cecil, demurely accepting. She stopped at her mother's door, and Mina came, finger on lips.

"Madam has just fallen asleep, Miss Cecil."

"Oh! Isn't that good? She'll be better when she



wakes. Will you tell her I am going for a little drive? I shall not be long."

"Yes, Miss Cecil."

"You received my note, of course?" said the girl, in a low tone, as she took her place beside the Senator. She looked at him critically. "Senator, dearest, you have been ill. I see the pain in your eyes."

"We'll come to that later, child. Was it necessary to send for me—like that?" He was very gentle. In spite of his habit of erectness and self-possession, interiorly now he felt old and broken. He detested the virtue of meekness in man or woman, but he had seen his little Cecil grow from fairyhood to girlhood, and she could never be anything in the world but the golden-haired child who had taken possession of his heart years ago. He would be her shield when chance offered, against all possible ill. He had no earthly ties. Malcolm Travers, because of a deep and tender friendship for Malcolm Travers' father, he loved almost against his own desire, and always with the hope that the blood in the young man's veins would help him to overcome his wastrel tendencies. Cecilia Emory was too frail a thing to stand the buffets that would be hers as Malcolm Travers' wife. Besides that, he knew much of Joyce Moore's story and guessed a great deal more, and he was well aware of the fact that Malcolm and Joyce were still deeply in love with each other.



"It was, of course, most necessary," said Cecil. "You see, I was in the library last night. The doors were open. I heard everything you said."

"Oh!" said the Senator.

The girl looked straight before her.

"I'm sorry you went to them. You know...they'll always feel...Well, I think you've antagonized them, and you've said yourself that my father can be a bitter enemy."

"Don't be afraid for me, Cecil." He spoke rather down-heartedly, she thought. "No one can do me much harm. In fact, child, I might as well tell you the truth. I had a wretched night. Peter called Dr. McDonald this morning. I've got to get away."

"Oh!" said Cecil. "Get away!"

"Yes. So you see...you need not worry—"

"I won't." She waited a few seconds. "I think I'll be glad for your sake. They will be terribly angry, and of course they will blame you."

"Blame me? Why?"

She stared at him with big, blue, astonished eyes.

"You know I'll never marry Malcolm Travers."

The Senator took in this astonishing statement, his chin resting on the top of his cane.

"Um...You'll never marry Malcolm Travers. Why not, little Cecil?"

"Because...he wouldn't have asked me ever, if it hadn't been for my father's money."

"Oh," he said. "Is that the only reason?"

"That's the reason I'm giving you, and my people. I shall tell him I don't care for him."

The Senator's brows met frowningly.

"Little girl, how are you going to tell them?"

"I told them last night. No...it wasn't *all* you. I was with Gladys Evans earlier, and she introduced me to Joyce Moore, and laughed when I asked her—" Cecil grew hot. "The *shame* of it!" she said. "They all know that he and Joyce Moore love each other, but that my father has *bought him for me!*"

And somewhere along Senator Hayden's spine ran a hot trickle. It had never seemed as bad to him as Cecilia's clear voice made it seem now, and no words could equal the blending of pride, shame, mortification, contempt, that was carried from her inner consciousness to the surface of her lips.

"So you have told them," was all he said, and his voice shook.

"Yes. It was very horrid. Mother is quite unhappy over it; that is why she is ill today."

"Listen, Goldielocks. Do you mean that they have *consented?* That they will *allow* you to break this engagement?"

Cecil laughed.

"Indeed not. They are determined that it shall stand. That's why I wanted to see you. You must help me."

"Cecil, darling, I'll do anything I can—anything!"

"Then I want to see Malcolm Travers...today...before I go back. Couldn't you manage that for me? Meet him somewhere, as if by accident? Go to his rooms...I'll wait in the car...and bring him down with you? Or doesn't he ride through the Park about this time? Colin does... in order to meet Muriel..."

"Unless Malcolm Travers has some terrific reason, Cecil, he never eats his breakfast before noon."

"How awful!" The girl looked genuinely distressed. "Then I must put it off, I suppose. I could hardly wait in the car until he got up, and dressed, and all that."

"What plan have you in your head, dear child? What do you intend to do?"

"I want to talk to Malcolm Travers, and I want to do it right away, to arrive at some sort of agreement...or compromise. I thought it all out in church this morning. You see, he *must* keep Father's friendship, as they're going into something together, I don't know what. I've planned how to do this so that I could take the blame, and yet know that he was really on my side, underneath."

She spoke hurriedly, falteringly. And he listened. Poor little Cecil!

"My mother...you know my mother, Senator Hayden. She's just darling to me, but she likes

Malcolm Travers so much she can't see any faults in him. Perhaps he hasn't any faults...I don't know...I never saw any, either. And I don't want to see any, or to find out any..." She was staring ahead of her; now she grasped his arm excitedly. "Do look! Look ahead of you, there on that path. Why, there's Mr. Travers now! It is...I'm sure it is...please call him...please run the car up...oh, aren't we *lucky*!"

The Senator spoke to his man. In a second the car had drawn up to the curb, just ahead of Mr. Travers, and the Senator was leaning forward. Malcolm Travers saw him first and would have waved his hand and passed on, for he was in no mood to listen to advice and the Senator's talk of the night before still rankled. Then he discovered that Cecil Emory was seated in the car beside him. He flushed, angrily, and his eyes darkened. The proximity of these two was most annoying, and he was not in the happiest state of mind. He raised his hat courteously and came forward. Cecil's eyes were shining. She seemed actually overjoyed to see him!

"Please come in with me," she said. "The Senator will not mind—"

"I am really sorry." He looked his distress politely. "I have a business appointment at ten-thirty—"

"I will not detain you more than ten minutes," she answered. "You *must* come—" her eyes met his; "it is absolutely necessary."



The Senator looked at her out of the corner of his eye, then studiously turned his glance across the street. He would not listen, yet he could not close his ears. She was so pretty, so gentle, so mild-mannered! Contrast her with suave Malcolm Travers, or with Elizabeth Emory, the hard. Poor little Cecil! His chin settled on the cane again, his eyelids drooped.

"You see," explained Cecil, making room for the young man beside her, "I did a most unusual thing this morning. I asked Senator Hayden to call for me. I did so want to have a talk with you—I felt he could arrange it for me. And just as he was refusing, I saw you!"

"You wanted to see me?" He looked at her sparkling, flushed face. She was unusually lovely this morning, really. "If you had phoned, Cecil—"

"Oh, no—"

"Anyhow, it is more than I deserve to have you *want* to see me!"

Her under lip was caught between her teeth.

"You know you have the *nicest* manners! No matter what you may say, you're wondering what in the world is the matter with me! I'm going to be very abrupt now, so you mustn't mind. It's about our engagement."

"Yes? Our—engagement." He was unsmiling, stern. "I shall be along some time this afternoon—"

He leaned forward and touched her hand suggestively. "And I hope you will like it. Please, Cecil, think of an early date. Let it be a June wedding."

A June wedding! She gasped. "Why...this is April. A June wedding! You are asking me to marry you—in June?"

"Yes. I hope you realize that I intend to make you happy, Cecil." He spoke confidently. "I know I can."

"You poor fellow!" said Cecil Emory. Then she frowned. "But I ought not to say that at all; you're not deserving of my sympathy. It doesn't seem very manly to marry one girl, while you're loving another."

The Senator's eyelids twitched convulsively.

"I beg your pardon!" Malcolm Travers sat up stiffly. "My kind friend here, has—"

"Now, listen," said Cecil Emory. "I met Miss Joyce Moore yesterday. Gladys Evans introduced me. How can you *look* at anyone else?"

"Miss Moore? What has she to do with our affairs?"

"Gladys Evans seemed to think she had a whole lot. It is too bad. You know I like you, and you didn't seem that sort at all. And how *can* she take you back after this?"

"Miss Emory—Cecil—will you kindly remember that it is very bad form to discuss your affairs in the

presence of a third person?" His voice was harsh—he was, indeed, angry.

"Oh...you mean Senator Hayden? But he's my dearest and oldest friend—and although I know he just hates to sit here I want him to listen to every word. I am not going to marry you, Mr. Travers. Wait, please," as he stared at her, dumbfounded. "When you talked to me first, I hadn't the faintest idea there was anyone else—how could I? Please don't interrupt, now. This is so—so horrid—and I must hurry, or I can never say it. I haven't much courage, you see." Senator Hayden detected the quiver in her tones. "You are so handsome and nice, and it pleased Father and Mother so much, and I thought everything would be so splendid. I didn't expect much affection: I'm not romantic...or anything like that, and I thought we'd grow fond of each other and be good friends; but when I saw that lovely girl yesterday...it just makes me ill to think that her life is going to be spoiled through me—" she paused for breath.

"Really, this is a most extraordinary conversation—"

"Now, please...you can't get away from the fact that you did love each other, and I don't know what can have come between you, but I won't, and I'm sure you love each other now. Afterward, you and I can be much better friends and everything will come out all right."



"You surely have some object in view in talking to me like this, Cecil." His voice had the polished, metallic note Senator Hayden knew so well, and hated. "There is another man in the case? What advice has our good friend here been giving you?"

"Another man? You mean I—why, of course not. I would never have agreed to marry you if I cared for anyone. And Senator Hayden is not to blame, really. I want your help—you must break your engagement to me."

"That is hardly a thing a gentleman can do, Miss Emory. But, perhaps," with a smile that was meant to wound, "you do not think I am a gentleman?"

Senator Hayden's mouth set grimly.

"Why," said Cecil, "until this moment. . . I thought so."

The Senator did not speak. A touch of color flushed Malcolm Travers' cheek.

"You mean—" he began.

"Whatever you think I mean," she said. "And if you force me to take the initiative in this matter—You can say, if you like, that you have learned that I am very much opposed to a marriage with you—"

"I must refuse such an extraordinary request, Miss Emory."

"Then," there was a little catch in her throat, "then you mean to keep this—compact?"

"I certainly do."



"Marry a girl who—who must positively dislike you...now...for what? For the sake of money? It doesn't seem possible!"

"Has it ever entered your golden head, Miss Emory, that you are really beautiful? Take a sporting chance! How do you know I am not desperately in love with you?"

She laughed at that—a little-girlish laugh that was sweet and ringing, yet which brought a wave of color to Malcolm Travers' dark face.

"Please don't try to be funny," she said. "You are sure of course? You're not fooling? You mean...to go on?"

"Positively."

"Well...all right. I'm sorry I interrupted your walk, but it was unavoidable. Senator Hayden, please let Mr. Travers get out."

The Senator spoke quietly to the chauffeur, a smile quivering at the corners of his mouth. Never in all his petted and careless life had the handsome Malcolm Travers been treated in this fashion. And by little Cecil! Of all people! Poor little Cecil! As for the young man he did not quite realize how summary had been his dismissal until he had said good-by, and watched the car drive smoothly away.

"Well, Goldielocks," said the Senator, and his voice was cheerful, "you've started something."



NEVER HAD MALCOLM TRAVERS BEEN TREATED IN THIS FASHION



"I don't think so. You heard him. Isn't it horrid?"

"Disgusting!"

"I'm doing right?"

"Of course you are. I wish I could help you."

"Just encouraging me helps me."

"I know, child. But I can't stay. And Dr. McDonald was pretty stiff with me this morning... pretty stiff. I put it off, however...my going away. I want to take in Ethel Chamberlin's dinner tomorrow night—I've promised her so faithfully. It will be horribly unpleasant."

"My people, you mean? Of course. Yes." She bit her under lip. "I'll do anything at all for them but this—this is a life job. It would be horribly unpleasant later, say when Malcolm Travers got tired of his bargain!" She laughed. "Even Colin will be against me. He's so in love with Muriel Carter, and I do think she is in love with him, and if Mr. Travers and I were married it would put a different aspect on his attention. He is hardly in her class at present."

Was that sarcasm? But no. The beautiful face was devoid of sarcasm.

"This morning my father said to me 'The Travers and the Emorys don't mix—not in this world.' What has come to my father, Senator Hayden? When I look back on that cozy, comfortable little flat in Sixty-fifth street, with just seven rooms, with father



and mother and Colin there, why, I could almost weep over it!"

"Your father is a wealthy man."

"Oh, yes—that is the answer."

"And you'll never be able to stand the pressure."

"I know that, too. My mother can hypnotize me. I won't stand it."

"What, then?"

"Why, I intend to find another home. Or earn my own living—I can do it. I wonder if you understand what it means never to do, talk, think for yourself? I'd like a change."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SLAVE

SENATOR Hayden gasped and seemed to collapse against the cushions of the car at this assertion.

"A change? Oh, Cecil, my dear child, you musn't do that! No matter what else happens, dearest, don't do that. You?"

She made a helpless gesture.

"What else, then?"

"Hold out, and hold on. Tell Travers. It ought to shame him, if nothing else will. Absurd idea! Where would you go, and what could you do? A baby would do better—or as good."

"I am no baby," said Cecilia Emory, "and I'd look for a job. I could cook—I'm a fine cook. I took the entire course in domestic science at college. Mother Philippa said she couldn't give me anything over one hundred but she added plus by way of mouth!"

"Cook!" Senator Hayden grinned.

"Or I could dress hair...and I'd make a good manicurist—"

"Please, Cecil, don't...don't say any more," said the Senator.

"Well, then, I'd learn some trade. I have a little money of my own—a little ready money, and some money in bank. I had nothing to spend it on, and Father has always been generous—"

"Listen, Cecil. You can't, you dare not, you must not!"

"I won't be quarreled with and made unhappy, and in the end give in because I don't want my father and mother to stay angry with me. I'm so tired of that. They hurt me terribly when they're cross with me, for I do love them, and I would grow more and more tired and at last—I'll go to see Mother Philippa this week, and tell her about it."

Senator Hayden breathed a sigh of relief.

"You'll tell her all your plans?"

"Of course. I tell Mother Philippa everything."

"And do you take her advice?"

"Nearly always. If some one was going to marry you, and it was a case like this, what would you do?"

"I'd go off, too, Cecil. But I would want to be very, very sure where I was going. And, honey, if you do go, let me know at once, please. I'd be frightfully worried, Goldielocks. It might really kill me."

"If you knew, you'd tell."

"Not unless you gave me your permission—on my word of honor."

"Good." They were driving slowly, now. She put her hand in his, confidently. "You know my father and mother well, don't you?"

"Very well. Your mother is a wonderful woman. I have often asked myself how much of that invention of your father's was his own. She is mighty clever, Cecil, mighty clever."

"But there's something wrong, Senator Hayden. If only Mother were satisfied *now*. But she isn't. Mother never will be, and yet right down in his heart of hearts, Father would be pleased — Though he never goes contrary to her wishes—never."

"I don't think he ever has, Cecil."

"I am not complaining. Mother is good-hearted... and proud. And I'm sure as sure can be that she's far and away better than most of these people she's so anxious to meet! Mother is so true, and speaks so nicely of every one, and never discusses them—she is a real lady. While these others—" there was a little note of petulance in her voice — "I think they hate her. They say cutting things, and she smiles and passes them by and all the time I know they're laughing. And if I married Malcolm Travers, she'd be with these people *all* the time, and soon she'd be so *hurt*. It makes me angry, Senator Hayden. That's why I sit so quiet and say nothing...nothing at all. I know they think me stupid, but I *despise* them!"

Senator Hayden was too startled to be amused. Cecilia Emory defending her mother! He felt much



stronger, exhilarated, in fact. Out of the wreck, the Emorys had saved one substantial thing. And it was through him that Cecil had been sent to those builders of characters! But she was speaking—

“One can learn so much just by looking on! I’ve been looking on since I came home from school—nearly a year and a half now. The people we ought to know, the people worth knowing, would be glad to come if we appeared before them as we are. But the sham ones, the ones married to this and that, and whose father was so-and-so! Ugh! They are so exclusive...look you over as if trying to read your history on your forehead.”

She relapsed into silence. Always taciturn, when words came she did not know how to stop them. Senator Hayden felt weak before her vehemence. He put his hand on hers.

“Cecil,” he said, “we are nearing your home. Promise me, won’t you, dear child, to go slow? Go slow! Don’t antagonize your mother or anyone. Think ahead.”

“I promise you that.”

“I’m going to rest up now. I’ll see you at the Chamberlins tomorrow night, and we’ll have a little chat there.” He spoke with some difficulty, and she looked at him in alarm. He was very white, she thought, and his eyes looked sunken. She leaned over and kissed his cheek, tenderly.

"Good-by, Cecil."

"Good-by, dear friend." They shook hands warmly, and Cecilia ran up the steps, waving to him from the top.

When she slipped inside she found her brother Colin. He had evidently been on the lookout for her, and here, at least, Mrs. Emory's plan had miscarried. For Colin had seen his father, and had left him after hearing of Cecilia's dreadful decision of the night before. It was dreadful, for it meant more to Colin than anyone else.

"Where were you?" he demanded, as she paused at the living-room door and looked in at him standing angrily in the center of the room.

"Out!" she answered briefly.

"Out! With Senator Hayden! I saw you from the window!"

"My goodness gracious!"

"I'll see that Dad puts a stop to that old fuss-and-feathers just about right now," said Colin. "How dare he call here after you?"

"But he didn't call here after me," said Cecil. She poked her finger in the top of her cloth hat, and spun it around with the other hand. "I sent for him."

"You sent for him!" Colin glared at her.

"Dreadful breach of etiquette, wasn't it?"

"Dad will call it something else. And Mother—"

"And Colin?" She twirled the hat round and round more violently.

"I heard from Dad—say, stop fiddling with your hat, will you?—that very sweet announcement you made last evening. Sounds romantic, dramatic, up-stage, yes?"

Cecilia looked at him. He was really anxious, perturbed as well as angry.

"You're not going to do it, Cecil. You're not going to spoil my future that way. And you will if you go on with it."

"Colin," said the girl, gently this time, "I never said a word about it before this, did I? I was perfectly agreeable until I saw Joyce Moore yesterday, and heard Senator Hayden last night. Now you just put yourself in my place. Father doesn't need Malcolm Travers, but Malcolm Travers can't get along without Father—not if what I hear is true. I won't take him away from any girl. I don't care enough about him in the first place—and you'll have to fight for Muriel Carter yourself. If she doesn't love you enough to marry you just as you are, I think I'd be man enough to walk on. And I won't marry Malcolm Travers if you never get Muriel Carter!"

Colin Emory blinked several times. Was this Cecil? If this were Cecil then they had never known her—she was a stranger to them. She swung on her heel now to leave the room, but he stood before her, his breath coming fast.

"You can't back out, Cecil," he said, "you can't back out! It has been announced. All the papers this morning have it."

"What is announced?"

"Your engagement to Malcolm Travers."

"In the newspapers?"

"Yes. There was someone to see Mother yesterday afternoon. She could not deny it, could she? You were engaged, weren't you?"

"Well...we can deny it now."

"Cecil?"

"Yes?"

"Don't deny it...yet. Later. For Muriel's sake, as well as mine. Until after the Chamberlin dinner. Please, kid! It means a lot to both of us—to Muriel—"

"Oh, but Colin, it isn't *honest*—it isn't. Can't you understand? Besides, think of me tomorrow evening at the Chamberlins. All sorts of talk. Everyone will see the announcement, and I can't let them act as if—as if it were going to stand."

"If you'll not say anything, Cecil, I'll help you afterward."

"To break it? But I have—"

"And with Mother and Dad—"

"Colin, why don't you let me finish? I have practically broken—"



"Be a sport, Cecil. You don't have to say a single word—just smile. No one expects you to talk. You've got 'em trained. Good girl! That's all. Just let it go at that!"

And before she could protest he had waved his hand gaily and left the room.

Very soberly Cecil walked up the stairs, her head bent, her brain in a whirl. She did not know how far things had gone between Muriel and Colin, but at any rate her part was to stand and wait for a while. Her lips curved. "Be a sport," said her father. "Take a sporting chance," said her lover. "Be a sport," echoed her brother. After all, what was it to be a sport? To throw the dice and depend on luck for all her future happiness? And who was throwing the dice? She wasn't.

She sighed wearily. It was going to be hard, but one couldn't walk straight on a crooked road. . . . She caught her breath, and straightened her shoulders. All right, Mother Philippa!

Not three blocks away from her, facing the same beautiful park, in a house as substantial and luxurious and as elegantly appointed as the Emory's, a little wizened old woman, thin to the point of emaciation, yellow of skin and tight of mouth, and with spectacles perched on the end of her nose, looked up with a cackle from the newspaper she was reading.

"Have you seen it, Joyce?" she asked shrilly. "Have you read the good news?" The tall girl who

was measuring some drops into a glass did not glance toward her.

"The good news?" she repeated, abstractedly.

"Why, the announcement. The engagement of Cecilia Mary Emory—he, he, he!—and Malcolm Hayden Travers—ho, ho, ho! There it is! In black and white, Joyce! It's finished at last!" She lay back in her chair and half closed her eyes, a smile of contentment on her face. "Finished at last! Finished at last!"

"It's just what you've schemed and planned for, Aunt Harriet," said the girl in an unmoved tone. "I hope it has pleased you."

"Most gratifying!" echoed the old lady. "Cecilia Mary Emory! Who is Cecilia Mary Emory? A nobody! Who has ever heard of her? No one. And Malcolm Travers is marrying her out of spite and disappointed love! How happy they are going to be—Malcolm Travers and his Cecilia Mary! Picked her up in some manicure shop, I'll be bound! Good, good!"

A flickering smile passed over the girl's mouth. She had a weapon to sting and annoy now where she had been often stung and annoyed.

"Don't be too sure, Aunt Harriet," she said. "We've been so long away and these are strenuous times. Many new faces and people are to be seen, and I think the Emorys are of some consideration."

"Oh, you do!" She straightened up and looked at her sharply. "But *I* do not know them."

"No? Yet Malcolm Travers and Miss Emory met at Ethel's."

"What!" And now the fingers curved crookedly, like claws. "What do you mean?"

"And they are very, very rich. Mr. Thomas Emory could buy and sell you twenty times over."

The grim face hardened.

"I've kept Malcolm Travers from getting you," she said.

"Well—from all that he said the last time we saw each other—" The girl smiled and brought the medicine to the old lady's side: "Drink this, Aunt, now—it is five minutes past the time—from all that he said then," she repeated, "I think he has been growing rather tired, and was glad to put an end to it."

The half-shut eyes flared open. She took the glass and drank its contents.

"You're not fooling me any, Joyce—if that's what you're trying to do," she said. "No one could see you and Malcolm Travers together and not know you loved each other." She laughed her shrill, ugly, venomous cackle. "In love with each other! And I won't die before he's safely married to Cecilia Mary Emory." She spat the words. "I wish him joy!"

"You may well do so. She is the loveliest girl I have ever met."



"You have seen her? Eh? You have seen her?"

"Yes. Talking to her, yesterday. Not pretty—just a beauty. A gold and blue blonde, with the rarest coloring—like a dream picture. I do not wonder he was glad to throw aside a worn creature like myself, soured and embittered by living in this atmosphere."

"Well, you're going to stay in it."

"Yes, I believe I am. You've said so often enough. She's cultured, too—convent-bred, I believe, and a Catholic. So is he, or ought to be. It's an ideal union."

The bitter face grew more bitter still.

"I shall never recognize them!"

"You don't have to. The Paul Chamberlins are giving them a dinner tomorrow night."

"I don't believe it!"

"You may. Ethel asked me last week. I've accepted."

The old lady beat the arms of her chair with both thin hands.

"I tell you, I won't believe it! Get Ethel on the phone for me."

Joyce Moore shrugged her shoulders.

"What's the use, Aunt Harriet? It will only upset you, and give Ethel the satisfaction of knowing that she has annoyed you."

"All right, then, I'll telephone to Paul. You call



Paul and tell him I want to see him. Why didn't you let me know this before? Have you kept it to yourself on purpose?"

"No, I haven't," said the girl, a little wearily. "And if you go on like this Dr. McDonald will tell you something you don't want to hear. I mentioned it now because I intend to decline Ethel's invitation. I have some sense of the fitness of things."

"Yes! Crawl!" said the old woman. "Crawl! It does me good to see you. Get Chamberlin."

The girl took the receiver off the hook, called a number, got it, and then held the instrument toward the crouching figure in the chair. She had trained herself well, during her years of slavery, this proud girl, and this scene was but the repetition of many others that had preceded it. Her heart was sick. The announcement in the morning's *Herald* had fallen on her like a death-blow. Cecilia Mary Emory... Malcolm Hayden Travers... And the girl was so lovely... so lovely... Was that what hurt most, she asked herself—the girl's loveliness? She sat down quietly, hidden in the roomy chair, out of sound of that ranting voice. Aunt Harriet would rave and scold at Paul Chamberlin, and when she got through would rave and scold at her. The girl was tired of it. Heart and soul were tired. Tired of the tread-mill existence, tired of her dependence, tired of the bond that held her to one of the most querulous, most venomous, most unjust, most ungrateful of creatures.

For it was not dependence alone that kept Joyce Moore in such bitter slavery. Her word had been given—given to the dead—and she would never break it. All her world, even Malcolm Travers, was in ignorance of this, and would ever remain so until it was ended. A girl of fourteen, she had made a solemn compact with the older lady that she had never broken. She was twenty-six now. Twelve years of ever-increasing despotism had she endured—and she must endure it, though it lasted for twice twelve years more. It could be severed only by the death of either.

The death of either. With her hands lying idly in her lap, Joyce Moore's thoughts lingered on the world. The last tie, the only tie that promised hope, had been snapped. She could not blame Malcolm Travers. Even if he lacked ambition, it was partly, if not wholly, her fault. Their engagement had been a mistake from the very beginning. She had told him so—but he would not heed. And then the biting sarcasm, the abuse which he had endured, patiently enough, from that embittered woman! No human being could endure it, and at last he had given way.

The death of either! With none of the consolations of religion to help her, with none of the loving hopes of Holy Church to buoy her up, forgetting, if she had ever heard it, that glorious promise "Blessed are those who mourn," now, in this dark hour—and only one of many such dark hours for the slave of

Harriet Joyce—what was to prevent her from thought of severing the bond, of quietly slipping into a future which, though unknown, could not be more hopeless than present sorrow?

She was roused by the maid, who approached her quietly, speaking, as did all the maids in that house, almost with tenderness to her, for they pitied her.

“Miss Harriet is calling for you, Miss Joyce, dear,” she said.

“Yes, Marie. I am going.” She passed her hand wearily over her forehead. A weak, mad thought hers had been! She would not die and leave her aunt alone to do just as she pleased—a woman whose living hate kept the blood coursing in her old veins. She was the victim—she, Joyce Moore. She had endured, she must endure. And...twelve years had already passed! She had lived through it—she could live through all...she would not take her hand from the plow till the end of the furrow.

The quick, rasping tones reached her ears before she pulled aside the draperies; the little black eyes snapped at her.

“So it’s true. Ethel Chamberlin has taken up with the Emorys! Someone told me he was once a long-shoreman! I believe it. I believe you’re behind the whole thing.”

Nothing was further from Joyce Moore at that moment, but a smile touched her mouth.



"I think, Aunt Harriet, that if Ethel felt I wanted her to give a dinner to the Emorys she'd take to her bed this instant in order to postpone it, no matter what Paul's wishes were. Ethel and I do not love each other—thanks to you, most kind Aunt Harriet!"

"Ah!" The old lady's eyelids quivered, and she laughed. "Why didn't you think of that before—I might have worked it that way. Paul . . . Paul laughed at me! Laughed at me! I hate Paul Chamberlin!"

Joyce Moore shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you know anyone, at the present moment, whom you do not hate?" she asked.

The old lady cackled as if she had received a compliment.

"There are degrees, my dear, there are degrees. Sometimes, I think I hate you more than anyone I know—until I think of Malcolm Travers. And after him I think of John Moore. There isn't hate enough in the world with which to hate him."

Joyce Moore shuddered.

"There is one mighty fine thing, Aunt Harriet," she said. "Your hate will die with you. You can't hold it—afterward. Unless—"

"Unless what—"

"Unless it's all going before you, and if it is you'll have a heavy load to carry."

"That's all you know about it. I'll find a way to leave some of it behind me."



"No," said Joyce, serenely. "Life is too strong, and death too sure. You thought you were plunging him into all sorts of trouble when you made me break my engagement to Malcolm Travers. And if it were not for the sword that you held over my head, I would never have done it." She smiled again; her glance met her aunt's without a flicker. "Now, with the fickleness of all mankind, my lover will solace himself at another's shrine, that of a girl whose riches make yours look a trifle, and who is of incomparable beauty. How is your hate hurting him—now?"

"I don't believe it."

"Ask Paul."

"Paul—"

"Or Ethel—"

The old lady watched her, and over that old face crept a look of cunning.

"Wait and see, my dear," she said. "Harriet Joyce never yet failed to accomplish her purpose. Someone has to pay. You're paying. Malcolm Travers will pay, too. You'll see, you'll see!"

"And, in the meantime," went on Joyce, calmly, "if Dr. McDonald comes in, you'll go to bed and stay there. You would not like that, Aunt Harriet."

The old lady sank back in her chair, her lips curved in bitter lines. This one time, at least, she had to agree with Joyce.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHAMBERLINS

AUNT HARRIET'S influence was like a bad habit—always objectionable. When Paul Chamberlin turned from his telephone conversation with her, his face was flushed with anger. His wife Ethel, who was Joyce Moore's cousin, in the third or fourth degree, stood in the doorway, watching him, her brush in her hand, and her soft, fine hair falling over her shoulders.

"My dear!" She had not heard the brief colloquy. "What in the world has happened to distress you?"

"Who but Aunt Harriet?" he demanded, with heat. "She grows more unbearable every day. Soon she'll be regulating the hours of our meals for us. She's like a serpent—an ugly-headed rattler, with seventy rattles in her tail, one for every year of her mean old life!"

"Good gracious!" said Ethel Chamberlin, in dismay. "What *has* she said, Paul, dear? You *know* Aunt Harriet!"

"I thought I did. This is a little scheme for you, Lady. You are to feign illness and postpone the dinner—for which act of graciousness she'll send us a check for a thousand in the next mail. And I am to

go over at once and explain this Emory business to her."

Ethel laughed heartily—more at her husband's disgusted face than at his words.

"I wish you could accept it—the check, I mean," she said. She sat down in the chair before her toilet table, and pushed the silver pieces aside to make room for her round and dimpled arms. "She's doing it to spite Malcolm Travers, of course."

"And why would you do it?" asked her husband.

"To eliminate the Emorys."

"Well..." her husband threw himself into the rocker at her elbow, "we're living in a great world."

"A great world...if people would let it alone," said Ethel, rather tartly.

"Which people?" he demanded. She laughed again. She was a small woman with dark hair and very fair skin, brown eyes and delicate features.

"Just now the Emorys are my problem," she said.

"Our problem, Ethel."

"Yes, dear. That *does* sound better, doesn't it? Oh, Paul, but I do detest that Mrs. Emory! If she were only vulgar or common, or just something but the real aristocrat, unnamably right, then I could forgive her, yes, like her! But through all her manner there is that faintly patronizing air. Sometimes I wish I could..."

She slapped her hands together and looked at her husband. He smiled.



"Well . . . I've seen that expression before, Ethel. Don't wish you could . . . to me. And I'm glad you know how to disguise your true sentiments. If Tom Emory dropped out of this now I'd have to accept that thousand of Aunt Harriet's for a meal-ticket."

"Heavens, Paul, is it as bad as that?"

"Nearly. I'm in to the neck. I've taken a sporting chance, Ethel, sure of his backing." He put out his hands, palms upward. "But he's a fine chap himself. You keep Mrs. Emory in good humor, and we'll soon be on easy street."

"How soon?"

"A month."

"A month! That's horribly long."

"Depends on how you look at it. If he stays with me, we're millionaires. If he turns me down, we're paupers."

"Well, it doesn't matter now, so much. I'm afraid the real mischief is done."

Paul Chamberlin looked his perplexity.

"Mischief, dear? What does that mean, mischief?"

"All sorts of things—and particularly one thing for which I—because of you—am directly responsible."

"Suppose you go into it," suggested her husband.

"Well, of course . . . only for you, Malcolm Travers and Cecil wouldn't have met."

"I think I did Malcolm Travers a good turn, there."



"I'm sure of it. But what sort of a good turn did you do Joyce?"

"You're not being sorry for or sympathizing with Joyce Moore?" he asked in astonishment.

"No, I'm not. Since the last time she told me to stop goading her and mind my own business when I urged her to leave that old grampus up there, I've let Joyce severely alone—just as she asked me to. There's no love lost between us, but I hate to have every one wondering and commenting—do you understand Joyce—"

"Please, Ethel! I can't begin the Joyce question this morning."

"No. But there's something else going on under your very nose."

"What else?"

"Just like a man," she sighed. "By the way, the engagement is announced this morning. Catch the Emorys missing a chance of advertising a thing like that!"

"Between—"

"Cecilia Mary Emory and Malcolm Hayden Travers."

Paul whistled.

"They've lost no time," he said.

Mrs. Chamberlin was silent. Then:

"Poor Joyce!"

"Alas, poor Joyce!" echoed Mr. Chamberlin. "They can't say Malcolm Travers has done anything—wrong. Besides, he is clever enough. He's in on old Emory's scheme, and I think he's going to do well—Malcolm has a great deal of personal magnetism. But this cuts Joyce out altogether now."

"It will raise all that horrid talk again about her and Aunt Harriet. It looks as if the old lady has some power over her—and yet we know that can't be true—though why she sticks is a mystery and I suppose always will be. Joyce has had her chances. There were Will King and Basil Torrens—both of them were attracted by her. Will King solaced himself with Minnie Harper, but I think Basil Torrens was hard hit. Do you remember how Aunt Harriet raged when Basil Torrens and Malcolm Travers tried to cut each other out?"

"Does the whole world remember it?" echoed Paul Chamberlin. "Though to tell the truth, I don't think Basil Torrens cared so much—I got that impression."

"We haven't heard from him in a long time—not since his mother's death."

"Business, my dear. He took that commission out west three years ago."

"I imagine," said Ethel, "that it was because old Mrs. Torrens and Joyce were so fond of each other that he became interested in the first place."

"Perhaps Joyce is in touch with him."

"No she isn't—I'm sure. But now, Paul, tell me your honest, private opinion of Colin Emory."

"Colin Emory. I wish you were a man, Ethel. With due deference to your sex I consider him a pop-injay, an insufferable coxcomb, clever as the dickens, but pretentious—a bluff. Heavens! Why must one be polite in the presence of one's better half these days?"

"Decent?"

"Decent? Oh, I suppose so. To be indecent would imply too much condescension. Lady, Lady, wouldn't I love to see him shoveling coal!"

"All right. But that silly, ridiculous, spoiled, pretty Muriel of ours has fallen head over heels in love with him."

"In love with Colin Emory!"

"Exactly. *Our* sister, Paul Chamberlin. Think of being related to the Emorys! Think of having the Emorys in the family!"

"Impossible!"

"But it's true!"

"Your father and mother will forbid it."

"Forbid what? Marriage to Malcolm Travers' wealthy brother-in-law? Not my father and mother. Colin Emory, decorated with good solid cash and elevated by such a connection? Mr. and Mrs. Colin Emory, and Mrs. Paul Chamberlin, who is Mrs.

Colin Emory's sister—" she laughed. "And Mrs. Malcolm Travers, who is Mr. Colin Emory's sister—"

"And Muriel is in love with him?"

"Worse. She's infatuated—and I'll do him the justice of saying that he's as deep in it as she is. I never dreamed of such a thing! Why, she could have had—"

"I know," said Paul Chamberlin, hastily. Pretty Muriel Carter's refusal of a certain bloated plutocrat the year previous had formed the topic of conversation for three solid months. He had tired of it. Unfortunately the plutocrat died six months after his proposal, which was fuel added to the flame—figuratively, at least, in this mundane sphere. "There is nothing to be done?"

"Absolutely nothing. Just consider his good points, that's all, and endure the bad ones."

"Well, he's handsome enough, and he has a certain manner, and he's well-educated—now, you needn't look like that! I'm enumerating the good points. For if Muriel wants him she'll have him and you can rave if you like and all you like."

Ethel Chamberlin sighed.

"That's the trouble. Really, Paul, I ought to be vexed with you. Only for you all this wouldn't have happened."

He laughed—not quite so pleasantly this time.



"You must take the bitter, too, Ethel. Only for me other things wouldn't have happened, either. There's always a chance, and Muriel's marriage to Colin Emory won't be the most terrible calamity in this world. I think Muriel would make things fly if anyone attempted to play tricky with her sister's husband, eh? If they marry I'll know where Tom Emory is if I want him, or I miss my guess."

Ethel pushed her hair back from her forehead.

"Do you realize," she said acidly, "that I've been waiting for your deal to close...to drop them?"

"Be careful, Lady. There's always a neutral ground, and Mrs. Emory is not stupid."

"Stupid? She leaves all the stupidity of the family to that inane daughter of hers. Malcolm Travers with a wife like that! Have you ever heard her talk?"

"No."

"Neither has anyone else."

"But she's certainly a beauty."

"Just that. Nothing more. I've sent three different men to talk to her, amuse her...and their faces...honestly! I wouldn't risk my reputation as a hostess tomorrow night. You'll sit on one side and Malcolm Travers on the other."

"I think I can stand it," he grinned. "And Malcolm will have to."

"Try to lean across her place, or something, when she makes that sign—she blesses herself—I believe

that's what they call it. Wouldn't you think they'd teach her not to do it in public? Malcolm Travers says it's quite original—that Roman Catholic thing she does. It *mortified* me last time. Honestly—”

“Now, never mind. It will be all right. I'll take care of the girl for you and you play up the Emorys. If Malcolm Travers is at his best—”

“He's sure to be—with Joyce there.”

“Joyce? Joyce coming?”

“Pleasant, isn't it? How could I dream Mrs. Emory would turn up trumps so soon? I am hoping that if Joyce sees the announcement she'll plead out of it, and I'll get Gladys Evans. At any rate I'm expecting a call from her now that you've had one from darling Aunt Harriet.”

“Then I'll get on—”

“And I'll see what mother has to say about Muriel—”

“Ethel—this is distinctly Muriel's business. Don't mix up in it just yet, until we're out of the woods. Tom Emory is new and all that, but he's as shrewd as a fox, and at this stage of the game I'm playing safe.”

“Don't say I didn't warn you. If Muriel marries Colin Emory, we'll have them on our hands all the time!”

“Colin is such a coxcomb he'd turn down his father and mother any day if he thought—”

Ethel Chamberlin laughed.

"Oh, Paul! Turn down his mother! Could any one in the world do that?"

"Well—"

"Besides, Muriel actually *admires* Mrs. Emory. It's gone as far as that. The only redeeming part of the marriage—if it comes off—is that at least we'll have Malcolm Travers in the family."

"I'm really sorry you're so annoyed, dear." Her husband rose, his hand resting on her shoulder, and she laughed up at him.

"That's the only thing that gives me courage—your sympathy," said his wife, and she smiled. "Just let me impress you once more. You must see that Cecil Emory is amused and entertained. She is very, very timid, and if Joyce should happen to come everything will be muddled."

"Especially for Joyce."

"No, for me. Malcolm Travers can't resist talking to her, and the Emorys might be frightfully displeased."

"That puts it in a different light. We mustn't displease the Emorys. Listen, Lady: Joyce is your cousin, after all, and only a poor relation—I'm not saying that in a mean way—only you don't have to hedge with her. Call her yourself if she doesn't call you, and ask her if she wouldn't like to withdraw—say that you'll find a substitute."

"Oh, that's so *raw*!"

"I know—but you'll be raw-nerved before tomorrow night."

"I'll think about it."

"Do. We're in for it—we can't help it. And whatever success I have will go to the credit of my own bright, thoughtful little wife."

She kissed his cheek.

"You have learned the secret, Paul," she said. "So many wives and husbands are just on biting terms. A woman will do much for her husband when she gets the right sort of flattery."

At two o'clock that afternoon Ethel called Joyce to the phone. That whole day Joyce had been debating how she could get out of the Chamberlin dinner gracefully. To pretend illness would seem to indicate that she cared. To withdraw without an excuse would give Ethel a chance to sneer at her, and Ethel had availed herself of such chances before. Now, at the almost ingratiating tones that came to her over the wire, an expression of relief crossed her face. But her voice did not show that. She was coolly amused.

"Oh, my dear Ethel," she said, "I have no interest in the matter... So you are afraid my presence will spoil your dinner? How?"

She listened to the reply. Her cousin was a little flurried.



"Thank you for your confidence. The Emorys might not understand? Of course not! Certainly you haven't had a chance to train them yet... Oh, my dear, I withdraw! Naturally!... Perhaps it would be just as well..."

"What's that, what's that?" It was Aunt Harriet, her querulous voice cutting across the conversation. "What's that? Give me the wire." Her claw-like hands reached for the instrument.

"Ethel thinks I had better withdraw from the dinner tomorrow."

"Withdraw? Withdraw? Give me that—give me that—"

"But Aunt Harriet," said Joyce, and her tones were plainly audible to the listener at the end of the wire, "I would much rather. It will embarrass Ethel so—and you know—"

"Give me the phone," said the old lady. "Ethel. Is this you, Ethel?"

"It is, Aunt Harriet."

"What do you mean by such a request?"

"I think that is Joyce's business."

"I prefer that she shall go."

"What does Joyce say?"

"Joyce has no say. She is going."

"Yes, Aunt Harriet. But you see yourself that Malcolm Travers will be here, and Miss Emory, and that things will be most unpleasant."

The receiver shook in Aunt Harriet's hands.

"That's your business—you're the hostess—you're giving the dinner. I hope you *are* embarrassed. I wish I could embarrass you more. What do you mean—you and Paul—by taking up with a lot of common laboring men?"

"Never mind, Auntie darling. That's my business, and I'm the hostess, just as you said. Please let me talk to Joyce."

"Either she goes to your dinner or she walks out of my house for good this instant." She cackled. Joyce, though accustomed to the goad, was stung under this one. Her face flushed. Aunt Harriet turned to her, looked at her then talked once more. "She has heard me—and the invitation stands, Ethel."

There was a pause.

"Well," asked the cool little voice, "is she packing? No? If she had any spunk she'd have been out years ago. Well, then, since you insist, Aunt Harriet . . . the invitation stands. I shall do my best to give Joyce a pleasant evening. Good-by, *dear* Aunt Harriet!"

Aunt Harriet jammed the receiver on the hook. Joyce Moore had risen, with trembling lips and eyes that blazed.

"Some day," she said, "you are going to go a bit too far, and when that day comes you'll pay for what you are doing to me!" Her hands clung together. "There isn't a judge in the land would convict me

if...if..." her hands reached out, clutching convulsively. Aunt Harriet sat back with snapping eyes.

"The door is open," she said, maliciously. "Go out, if you like. Now—this minute. And no judge in the land will convict you of—anything you may do to me—if you tell them why you have stayed here. Get on the stand and tell them that, and when it is told, my instructions will be carried out. I have taken care even of that contingency, my dear niece—daughter of John Moore!"

"Aunt Harriet, I think you are possessed by the devil."

"Ah! Then have me—what do they call it?—exorcised. Yes. Have me exorcised. Malcolm Travers may be able to tell you how to go about it."

Very slowly the girl rose from her chair, her head drooping. She walked to the door, hesitated an instant, then came back again.

"You are driving me even that far," she said. "A promise is a promise, and God knows I have tried to keep mine. I am going to write to John Moore, and tell him the price I am paying for your silence. After all, Aunt Harriet, he is my father, and if he ever loved my mother—and I am sure he did—he would not want my mother's child to suffer as I am suffering. You see," she said, and her smoldering eyes fastened on the wizened old face, "at last I am finding a way out. And if John Moore is willing—"

"Willing?" jibed Aunt Harriet, shrilly. "You

catch him being willing. Remember, I know him, and you don't."

"I've served you faithfully. Why do you hate me?"

"Because you are his daughter."

"But I am your sister Margaret's child, too. Have you forgotten that?"

"Yes. And I want to forget it. I hate John Moore and I hate John Moore's child."

A little smile played about the corners of the girl's mouth now. It was a deadly smile. Aunt Harriet looked at it, fascinated.

"I take back all that I have said about the devil. You are not possessed. You are just crazy, Aunt Harriet! Crazy!" She began to laugh loudly, shrilly, pointing a shaking finger at her. "Crazy! Look at her! The old witch is crazy! And you know what they do to crazy people, Aunt Harriet... They shut them up... they shut them up..." She screamed again, more loudly. And laughed again... and sobbed. Aunt Harriet seized the bell at her elbow and rang it. There was the sound of hurrying feet. Marie came in, and Oscar, the butler.

"Take her away," said Aunt Harriet. "Take her away! She's gone mad!"



## CHAPTER VI.

### WITH RESERVATIONS

“WHAT time is it, Mina?”

“About two o’clock, madam.”

“Two o’clock! Whatever possessed you to let me sleep that long?”

“Oh, madam, you rested so quietly—I did not like to disturb you.”

“Well, I can’t blame you—you are a real treasure, girl.” Mrs. Emory twisted her head cautiously on the pillow.

“Your headache, madam?”

“Not a trace of it. Where is Miss Cecil?”

“I believe she is in the music-room, madam. I heard the piano a few moments ago.”

“Good. Has anyone called?”

“Yes, madam. Early this morning. Senator Hayden. He and Miss Cecil went for a ride.”

“Senator Hayden! And Miss Cecil!” Mrs. Emory sprang up so suddenly that her head throbbed, reminding her that her nerves were not quite settled.

“At what hour?” Her voice was sharp.

“About ten o’clock, madam. Miss Cecil was back for luncheon, and has not been out since.”

“Well,” Mrs. Emory regained her composure

almost instantly, "I am sorry I missed Senator Hayden. But he is such an old friend he will overlook it—and he is very fond of Miss Cecil."

"Yes, madam—shall I bring you some luncheon here?"

"No—not here. Tell them to get me a little bouillon—nothing else. And I want my things—a walk will do me good."

"Yes, madam."

Mrs. Emory went down to the simple meal prepared for her. She wore a gown of clinging black, which suited her perfectly, and Cecil, with bright eyes and a smile on her lips—and thinking, too, how very lovely her mother was—followed her into the dining-room.

"Better now?" she asked.

"Much better, Cecil." Mrs. Emory had made up her mind to let bygones be bygones. "Have you seen this morning's paper? Where is it?"

"Why, I believe Mina brought it to your room. Shall I go for it?"

"No, my dear. You shall send for it."

Cecil smiled as she dispatched the maid upstairs to her mother's room. The paper was brought down and placed at Mrs. Emory's elbow. She turned the pages hurriedly, and finding what she wanted, a look of satisfaction stole over her face. Cecil was at the window drumming on the pane. Evidently her mother's

interest centered in the announcement which the girl herself had not yet read, and which she shrank from reading. But she did not speak of it. It was as well to avoid a dangerous subject.

"Tell me, dear—has Burnett sent your dress?"

"It came this morning. It is lovely."

"That is nice." The mother paused a moment, her eyes on the printed page before her. "Cecil, you gave me a dreadful shock last evening. It was so entirely—unexpected."

"Yes, Mother." She spoke colorlessly. Was she going to start it all over—and so soon?

"I want a chat with you, dear—if we could meet on some sort of ground. If you will only consider us as well as yourself—your dear, good father, who has given you so much and asked so little."

Cecil stopped drumming. "Your dear, good, sensible mother," had been her father's words. "Mother, I—"

"Please! Don't commit yourself yet. I won't either. Let's agree to let things stand as they are until we are quite sure of what we are doing. I am speaking for myself, too, Cecil. You are determined, you said last evening, not to go on with something to which you have already pledged your word. Very well. I pledge myself to listen to all your objections, and weigh them as if they were my own."

Cecil's eyes opened wide. She turned from the window.

"Why, Mother—that will be lovely. I am sure if you do that—"

"I can understand how a young, untried girl like you would feel piqued, and even offended, on learning that the man who had asked her to marry him was once attentive, engaged to be married, in fact, to another girl. The story was not strange to me, and when Malcolm Travers first spoke of his love for you I was very frank with him about Joyce Moore. You will believe me, Cecil?"

"Of course I believe you," said Cecil.

Mrs. Emory rose to her feet. "Come," she said. "Come into the living-room with me." She put her arm about her gently, and the unusual tenderness of her voice, the soft clasp of her hand on Cecil's shoulder brought a mist to the girl's eyes. Once inside the living-room she sat down, and drew Cecil to her, until the girl's soft cheek rested against her mother's hair.

"I shall not force you to do anything you do not want to do. Marriage is a very sacred obligation—"

"Oh, Mother, I never realized that until yesterday!" said the girl. "Only then. And I have been so foolish about it. I'm not one bit in love with Malcolm Travers. I had no right to promise anything at all."

A curious light shone in the mother's eyes.

"Well, my dear—I know you do not dislike him."

"Of course I don't."



"If you really *cared* for anyone else, no matter how poor he might be—or if there were any difficulties in the way of religion—or if Malcolm Travers was not—not nice—or even *careless*—your father and mother would hesitate a long time. But there is no one else; there are no difficulties; he is as good as gold, attentive and polite."

"Mother, when I met Joyce Moore yesterday—when I heard Senator Hayden last evening—I felt like a criminal!"

"Dear, sensitive child! You know so little about—things. Forgive me! I should have told you—you ought not to have been kept in ignorance. You heard Senator Hayden. He is—a chivalrous gentleman."

Cecil stared. A chivalrous gentleman! And last night he had been—

"I was with Senator Hayden this morning," she remarked.

"Yes. Well? What did he tell you—what did he say?" The over eagerness in the mother's tones sealed the girl's lips. She hesitated. Then, as if measuring her words:

"He told me to be very careful—and to go slow."

"Ah!" A light of relief broke across Mrs. Emory's face. "Perhaps he, too, has discovered that anyone is liable to error."

"Error?" asked Cecil, sharply.

"I don't know how to say it. Such things happen—and they always make one feel ashamed. The truth

is, dear, that Joyce Moore has systematically pursued Malcolm Travers for the past four years. Every kind action, every pleasant word, has been so much capital—oh, I know what I am talking about! They have been engaged to be married for the last three years, but it has always been deferred on some pretense or other. Everyone knows this. His friends invited her; her friends invited him—they were tacitly thrown together until the possibility of their marriage became... a joke. I do not know what happened between them. Malcolm Travers told me most emphatically that he and Joyce Moore had agreed to disagree, as he put it. And, my dear, he said it as if he were glad, and he must be. How could he, in conscience, ask for you if he weren't?"

Cecil's eyes were troubled.

"She doesn't look like that kind of girl," she said.

"Have you not learned to distrust appearances... yet?"

"Yes, Mother. And words."

"Not mine, Cecil?"

"Oh, no, oh, no! But I want to trust—not people, but my own instincts, my own intuitions—"

"And your mother, Cecil, your mother? Do you think I would deceive you?"

"Not... not unless you were deceiving yourself," said Cecil, slowly. "This girl may be misunderstood. These things may have truth—a three-year engage-

ment, as things go nowadays, sounds odd—but what were the reasons?”

“I should judge—a reluctant bridegroom,” said Mrs. Emory.

Cecil’s face clouded.

“I’m sick of everything and everyone,” she said. “I don’t think I’ll ever get used to living. Back with Mother Philippa all seemed so serene, so easy. There were no shades of right or wrong-doing—a thing was right or wrong and you acted accordingly.”

“My dear, convent life and life in the world—”

“Not that only. Our own other life. Our flat in Sixty-fifth street.”

“Don’t, Cecil.” Mrs. Emory shuddered. “Don’t bring back even a memory of that cheap and dreadful place.”

Cecil made a little despondent gesture.

“It wasn’t cheap to me, nor dreadful, either. It was just home, and I loved it.”

“Cecil, don’t *talk* like that! It is too ungrateful.”

“Well, then...now you’ll let me talk. It isn’t all Joyce Moore, Mother. It is just that the Joyce Moore thing opened my eyes to what I am doing. When I first met Malcolm Travers I liked him—I’ve told you that again and again. He paid me a different sort of attention—he noticed me and was kind. I was flattered, I suppose. At first I didn’t think of such a thing...as...that he would fall in love with



me. Then it happened. He asked me to marry him. He is a Catholic—a baptized Catholic. He may not be a very ardent one, but at least we have one religion.”

“My dearest, I assured you then as I am assuring you now—”

“Why...of course.” She was silent. “I gave my promise with the utmost tranquillity. I don’t know exactly why—unless that you seemed to want it more than he did and I had always tried to please you. I have never known a single instant of peace since.”

“Nor will you until you are married,” said her mother. “Why didn’t you tell me all this? Don’t you think I understand, know, feel, for my own child? Yours is no unusual experience.”

“Perhaps not,” said Cecil gravely. “Doubts and misgivings kept running before me continually. His people are not my people, his world is not my world.”

An expression of bitterness crossed Mrs. Emory’s face.

“But you have the key that will open every door in this world, Cecil. You have the key.”

“No.” Something in the softly spoken negative sent a flush to Mrs. Emory’s cheek.

“You will tell me next that you are destined for the convent,” she said.

“No,” said Cecil, again, decisively. “Else I should never have returned to you. Mother Philippa and I discussed that thoroughly, for I had my doubts. It



was she who sent me away. I did not expect to meet with such sham and pretense—" She stopped: "here in my own home," she would have ended, but dared not.

Mrs. Emory pointed to the mirror above the mantel—and laid a persuasive hand on Cecil's arm.

"Look, my child. I told you you had the key—there it is," she said. "Your beauty won Malcolm Travers' heart; your beauty can make your husband an adoring companion. Can't you realize that you *are* beautiful, and use your splendid weapon? What a power you can be in Malcolm Travers' circle! You will meet people who will be glad to do your bidding, who will envy you, imitate you! You will be rich—very rich—your father and I have seen to that! We have planned nothing for ourselves...only for our children...and with that man's name there is no place you may not take. Rouse your husband to ambition, as I did your father. You may do as you please. You will have beauty and wealth and social position."

There was no gainsaying her deep earnestness. It was in her voice and thrilled through her body; her eyes flashed, her fingers clenched in the strong emotion that possessed her.

"You want to do good? No greater power for good was ever set before a girl. With your education and the development that comes with marriage..." She struck her hands together impatiently.

"Oh, what a blind and foolish girl that I must tell you all these things—that you cannot see them for yourself! Would that I had your opportunities and your youth—" She pressed her lips together. "You'll think this over, Cecil?"

The girl's head drooped. How to tell her mother, in the face of this outpouring of her ambition, that she had already seen Malcolm Travers, and had broken with him? She was pale. She shrank into herself as she always did, when her mother strove against her. Obedience to her mother had always been so much easier than contradiction. It was so pleasant to drift on a strong current. Mrs. Emory put sanguine hope in her silence.

"My good girl," she said in a gratified tone. "My dear, good girl!" She turned toward the door. "Yes, Alfred?"

"Mr. Travers, madam."

"Mr. Travers!"

Mrs. Emory rose gracefully, and Cecil watched her with fascinated eyes. Poor mother! To have such a child! Tom Emory, the longshoreman—yes, she was honest Tom Emory's daughter. She was not the daughter of that man who had said "My honor is my bank account." And this was the longshoreman's wife—that lovely, princess-like woman. Longshoreman's wife! Cecil felt an impulse to burst into laughter at the absurdity of it. She had never been that, really! She had always seen herself gliding

through stately rooms, in splendid clothes, welcoming all who came to her with the grand manner. All her life Elizabeth Garvan Emory must have been preparing for such an hour as this! And the greeting she gave! Such a delicate air of intimacy—so correct. Cecil was lost in admiration. Her mother was perfect. What a pity she could not—what was it Colin had said?—"play the game." Why not? What would opposition gain for her? Only trouble and annoyance.

But—

And it was this "but" that obtruded itself.

"I presume that you will want to see each other without—mother," smiled Mrs. Emory now. "Cecil and I were talking over a few arrangements, Malcolm—"

Cecil looked at him. What was he about to say? What did his smiling countenance hide? Had he thought better of his refusal of the morning and would he now — A feeling of hope went over her.

"Cecil and I have a very important engagement," said Malcolm Travers, and his eyes looked straight into the girl's blue ones. "The most important one in the whole world. She has not yet set the date for our wedding, and I won't leave here until she does."

"Well," said Mrs. Emory, and neither Cecil nor the young man knew what satisfaction filled her at that moment, "I don't believe she has seen the an-



nouncement yet! You've read it once or twice, haven't you?"

"At least a thousand times," he answered, playing up to her challenge. "Perhaps more. I didn't count them."

Mechanically Cecil picked up the newspaper from the table at the end of the davenport. The words stared at her from the printed page: Cecilia Mary Emory. . . She turned to her mother, with the paper in her hand, but her mother was gone . . . and in her place stood Malcolm Hayden Travers.

"I did not know. . . this," she said, a little chokingly, "until Colin told me."

"Did you not?" coolly. "It doesn't matter. And won't you sit down?"

She sat on the edge of the chair. She was nervous, worried.

"You have told your mother about. . . this morning?"

"No," she said. "I did not get the chance. I thought perhaps you might help me."

"What? After this thing?" He hit the newspaper with the back of his hand. "I've had enough, Cecil; I'm not going to have any more. Besides, I sha'n't give you up. And that's that." He reached over and took her hand in his. "Shut your eyes!" he laughed, and then a slender hoop was placed on her finger and she looked down at a stone that seemed to wink up at her, knowingly. "This is how I am going to



help you, Cecil," he said, and lifted the hand to his lips. When he would have put his arm about her she shrank from him. But he drew her closer. "What!" he said. "Am I so abhorrent to you?"

Cecil's heart was beating so that she felt breathless. Her figure trembled in his clasp, and slipping from him, she stood up, tugging at the ring with her right hand.

"Leave it alone," he said, without rising. "Do not take off your ring."

"It is not my ring," she said. His face was cold, his eyes steady, his glance masterful.

"It is your ring—and you shall not take it off."

Cecil paused. First her mother—the domination of her mother. And for this they meant to substitute the domination of—a husband? Her breathing grew calm; she regained her self-possession. She was merely a necessary inanimate object, then! Well for Malcolm Travers that he did not know her thoughts. She held out her hand, her head turned on one side.

"This is my engagement ring, Mr. Travers?"

"It is."

"What are you giving me with it?"

"I shall make you a good husband."

"According to my ideas or your own?"

"Both."

"We may not agree."

"Then the fault will be yours."

"I am securing—an absolutely faultless lover?"



"I DID NOT KNOW THIS, UNTIL COLIN TOLD ME"



"No," he answered, "but you will have an absolutely faultless husband."

She smiled then.

"I do not want him—and how can a thing be faultless when I am so willing to find fault with it?"

"The fault will be yours." He was watching her warily.

"Mr. Travers—my mother has been talking to me," she said. "She has asked me to consider everything carefully. Senator Hayden, my dearest friend, tells me this, too. I have promised them to think about...the future. My mother told me things that hurt me. I don't want to believe wrong of you. I like you very much." She was quite self-possessed. "Now there is something I ought to hear. Has Joyce Moore thrown herself at you—was your engagement to her, as it were, forced on you from chivalry?"

The man's face burned.

"Who dared to tell you that?" he asked.

"Mr. Travers!"

"It is absolutely not true!" he answered hotly. "It is not true. How could anyone say that of Joyce Moore, the proudest girl God ever made?"

"Then...isn't there something you ought to tell me?"

"Yes," he said doggedly, "there is. I fell in love with Joyce Moore. We *were* engaged to be married—absolutely against her will. But I persisted. She



told me then she would never marry. She repeated it time and again. She repeated it three months ago—more emphatically than ever. There is no tie of any kind or sort between us. She will not marry—ever. We parted the best of friends and I come to you with a clear conscience. And that's the truth."

"As far as it goes," she said, "that's the truth. But, oh, Mr. Travers, you have not yet said, once, that you do not love her."

He took the hand she extended.

"I say it now—I do not love her. And...I am very fond of you. *Very* fond of you. I repeat again that I shall do the best I can to make you a good husband."

Cecil smiled, a little bitterly.

"Thank you. I should be grateful, I am grateful, for your frankness. We are Catholics. I don't think you are a very practical one, but still you belong. The marriage tie is not until we get tired of each other—it is for life—a whole lifetime."

"That does not frighten me," he said, smiling. For the first time a misgiving smote him. She was in such deadly earnest—and there was surely something beneath her calm beauty. This was no milk-and-water maid, ready to yield without protest to a stronger mind. He recalled Mrs. Emory—indomitable—imperious. Did the girl have the same characteristics? Under soft speech, long silences, pointless observations, was there hidden such will-power as her

mother possessed? Impossible! These protests were but the ebullitions of a romantic girl.

"Then there is nothing more?" she said.

"Nothing more. You are satisfied?"

"With what you have given me? Have I any choice? Really," she added, "I think you are looking for a great deal of trouble. It had better not be. A wife with a conscience in your set, Mr. Travers, would be worse than obnoxious—to you, most of all."

He laughed lightly.

"When a girl has hair like yours and eyes like yours and a face like yours, she can do just as she pleases, and there is no one to say her nay. I should like," he added, and there was a look in his eyes that she had never seen before, "anyone to criticize . . . Mrs. Malcolm Travers!"

"I hope," she said, very gently, "that no one will ever have the opportunity to criticize . . . Mrs. Malcolm Travers, whether I own that name or not."

"The engagement stands, then?" he asked.

"If you will have it so—with reservations. I broke one promise this morning—now I promise—nothing."

"You may make what reservations you like. I mean to have you." He bent toward her, but she flushed and drew away.

He laughed.

"Some day you shall ask for what you now refuse, little lady. I can wait."

Cecil looked at him curiously.

"This is—love making..." she said. "How... funny!"

His lips twitched. "You find it so?"

"Yes," she answered. "And we won't have any more of it. Not until it is an engagement—without reservations."

She spoke lightly enough, but that odd thought struck him once more: What if...? Mrs. Emory's entrance diverted him.

And Cecil was wrung with self-scorn. Once more she had temporized, put off, yielded. Once more she had stifled protest as the current bore her on.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MAN FROM THE WEST

WHILE that unsatisfactory conversation with pleasant-spoken Aunt Harriet had left her a little more than angry, Ethel Chamberlin was to encounter still another disappointment. At that moment the cause of it had no thought of Ethel Chamberlin, but was lying, drained of every bit of his resistance, seemingly, on a couch in his suite of rooms, his head raised high, and his man Peter hanging over him with anxious care. For on his return from that drive, drawing, as he well knew, on every bit of his reserve strength, Senator Hayden had collapsed, and Dr. McDonald, hastily summoned, had had an anxious half-hour. But when at last he brought him round again, his orders were brief and explicit.

"You're to get away at once," he said. "Not tomorrow, but tonight. Peter will have to go with you. I can't trust anyone else, and you'll let him do whatever he will, for he'll be acting under orders—my orders. You're good for twenty years yet, Doug," he added, "if you'll just take care. Whatever made you do such a fool thing?"

"I'd do it again," said Senator Hayden grimly. "There was no choice."



"All right, then. You're going back to the Nevada mountains, where you were born. And if you're good I'll spend a month with you at the end of the summer. Peter, you know what you have to do now. Get down to the station as soon as you can, and get tickets and the reservations necessary. He's not to move a finger without cause until he gets to Winnereka."

"Yes, doctor," said Peter. He had made the trip before.

"Telephone ahead to Denton, so that he can send to the station for him. He is to stay in bed a week after he hits the ranch," said Dr. McDonald. "And then—"

"And then—" Senator Hayden looked up with a twinkle in his sunken eyes.

"And then go out and shoot mountain lions, if you can find 'em," said Dr. McDonald, chuckling.

"We must have our little joke," said Senator Hayden. He waved his hand. "Well, Peter, we've been expecting this, and it won't take us long to get ready. The tickets are soon bought, and if anyone can get reservations at a second's notice, it's Peter. That's why I keep him," he added, grinning up into the man's concerned face.

"That's why I stay, sir," said Peter, promptly. "The packing will take an hour and a half. I'm ready for those orders now, doctor."

"Peter didn't serve ten years in the United States Army for nothing," said Senator Hayden. "I'm under arrest, I suppose."

"Yes, sir—indefinitely," added Peter, and Dr. McDonald grinned.

"Ah, ha!" he jibed. "You'll meet no more young ladies for some time, Doug...not if Peter knows it." Then, at the expression on his old friend's face, "That's another little joke," he added hastily. "There's been no real harm done; you won't be any the worse for it a month from now."

So it was that twenty minutes later, on his way to the railroad station, Peter delivered a message from Senator Hayden to Ethel Chamberlin, apprising her of his illness, and his immediate departure. It was only one of those disappointments which every hostess experiences, but it added fuel to her vexation, and she felt that she had had more than her share for one day. Joyce Moore could have been safely left to Senator Hayden's benevolent care—he was one of the best-natured and most obliging of men, a host in himself when there was a breach to be stopped. "You know how heartily I regret..." She read the words over several times. "Well you'll never know how heartily I regret," she said, frowning, and tapping the floor with one pointed slipper. "If Joyce Moore takes it into her head to flirt with Malcolm Travers I shall be in a pretty stew. Regret! Oh, my dear Senator! One

man short and Joyce, who was to have been your special care, in demoniacal mood, I presume! And everyone knows that Malcolm Travers can no more resist her, if she chooses to crook her finger—”

For, though Ethel Chamberlin voiced her detestation of Mrs. Emory, in her heart she was the least bit afraid of her. She was afraid of her shrewd common sense, her perfect coolness under trying circumstances and the calm way in which she could, at most embarrassing moments, use that faintly patronizing air, acquired, Ethel Chamberlin thought, God only knew how. Cecil Emory had found the key, however, in her musings. Mrs. Emory had been preparing long years for all that she was facing and enjoying now. Again she frowned. There must be some way out. “I wonder if Paul—”

She thought a while. Poor Paul! She hated to annoy him—she knew he was going through a siege at the present time. “But this dinner is his affair as well as mine, and he may have a suggestion,” she thought, as she put through a phone call. In a few seconds he had responded.

“Paul, listen. Senator Hayden has sent his regrets.”

“So? Does that equalize matters?”

“How?”

“Have you called Joyce? Or has she sent hers?”

“She has not sent hers. Darling Aunt Harriet told her she could leave the house at once if she



dared to refuse to come—so that was enough for Cousin Joyce. All I want now is a suggestion—we'll do the best we can think of and trust to luck. Is there anyone you can think of?"

"You'll never guess who in a thousand years."

"Then you have someone—honestly?"

"Yes—Torrens."

"Torrens? Torrens? Basil? Not Basil?"

"The same. He's at the Metropole. I'll take care of it. I came across him by chance on the way down, and we're to meet there again tonight."

"Paul, this is a blessing!"

"You're walking on delicate ground, Lady."

"Trust me."

It took Ethel a few moments to compose herself. Truly she was walking on delicate ground—but if Basil Torrens' liking for Joyce Moore had endured, all might still go well. A little smile quivered at the corners of her mouth. Joyce would be too occupied with Basil to bother her head over Malcolm Travers—too anxious, she was sure, to prove that she could do without her erstwhile lover. And Joyce Moore abroad was nothing like the perturbed girl who lived under such nervous tension with old Aunt Harriet. She had a subtle wit, and was, at times, brilliant. Her sarcasm cut, which was to be expected, and which those who knew her well excused in her. There was no mischief she might



not be capable of concocting, bruised, as she was, in heart and mind. Ethel Chamberlin had, of course, no idea why she remained with the most hateful being she had ever known, but she did know that Joyce was often driven to distraction and apt to take it out on the first person who chanced to come along. She was not a patient endurer all the time. So when Basil Torrens' card was brought up to her later in the afternoon, the pretty young woman almost bubbled over with joy.

"Glad to welcome you back to America," she said, holding out both her hands.

"Well," drawled the young man, in a pleasant voice, "I've just come from there. The latest statistics prove that New York City isn't America."

"Oh, statistics!" mocked Ethel Chamberlin. "Let me look at you—I suppose America's out Colorado way?"

"Why, it was there until I moved to Utah," said Basil Torrens, his eyes shining. "I think that's what makes our America. Every state has some particular attraction to add to the glorious whole."

"You're looking well," said Ethel Chamberlin. "You're so brown...and your hair is lighter—"

"Sun-bleached," remarked Basil Torrens, laughing. "I assure you it is only the sun! On my honor!" But he was a fine picture nevertheless, over six feet in height, brawny of shoulder and limb, with light brown hair, hazel eyes, irregular features,

and a smile that showed a splendid set of strong white teeth. "I feel out of it," he said. "I've been in the saddle most of the time, and I hate your old pavements. They hurt my feet. Lord knows," he added, quaintly, looking down at his No. 13's, "there's enough of 'em to hurt!"

"Never mind," consoled Ethel. "Come and sit down and practice drinking tea from a china cup—I have a few odd ones and you may break them if you like. Look here, Basil, do you know you've been sent to me by heaven?"

"Is that so?"

"I have an important dinner on tomorrow night, and it *must* go off well. And here is poor Senator Hayden ordered away by the doctor—"

"How is the old chap? I like him immensely."

"Just the same—just as affable as ever, but with just as little stamina, too, I think. I want you to come in his place. Will you, Basil?"

"Delighted, Ethel."

"Good." She hesitated. There was more to tell him, but, as Paul had remarked, she was "walking on delicate ground."

"Have you seen the papers this morning?"

"All of them—for a week back. I had to get in touch with things somehow. I'm only on here temporarily you know. That partner of mine has some new deal or other and wouldn't close until I came

and looked it over. I intend to remain in the West, Ethel."

"Perhaps, then, you read the announcement? Malcolm Travers is being married—"

"What? Now? I thought that was finished ages ago."

"He isn't marrying Joyce, Basil."

"He isn't marrying Joyce?"

"No. They're new people. The Emorys. Cecilia Mary Emory." Ethel spoke hurriedly. "Joyce—threw him over. The Emorys are very wealthy and the girl is a beauty. You'll meet her tomorrow night, too."

"Yes," said Basil Torrens quietly. Ethel could not tell from his manner what effect the news had on him. "I was out to mother's grave this morning. Someone has been taking good care of it. I was much pleased, and touched, too. I expected to find it in poor shape, in spite of the fact that I ordered it attended to. You see, it's kind of lonesome—when one's all alone. You don't know that, there's such a crowd of relatives in your family."

"Oh, indeed!" remarked Ethel, with sarcasm. "You don't know what you're spared. I shouldn't be surprised but it was Joyce took care of the grave. Her own mother's grave is somewhere in the same place, and as far as I can understand she's always pottering around there. Joyce has a melancholy turn of mind, as perhaps you are aware."



"Well," he said, "I don't know who did it. I'll find out. How is our beloved Aunt Harriet?"

"Worse, thank you," said Ethel, soberly. "She must drink it. She's got everything I ever knew skinned alive for downright cussedness. She ought to live in a padded cell."

Basil Torrens laughed heartily.

"Now I know I am back in New York," he said. "Just that touch completes the picture!"

"The Barnards are coming—the Teddy-Barnards. Mrs. Teddy was Barbara Evans—Gladys came out this year. You remember them? The Smith-Sheridans, Nell Swayne and Tony Desmond, Will King and Minnie, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison—Dean Harrison, the banker, that is—Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Emory—Mr. Emory is in something with Paul—Colin Emory, and Muriel, Malcolm Travers and Cecil Emory, yourself. . . and Joyce Moore." She made a little bow. "There are the guests, Basil, and you're pretty well acquainted with all of them but the Emorys."

Basil did not look at her; his face was quite expressionless, but there was something in Ethel's tone that told him she was not in love with the Emorys. He gave no hint of this in his manner, but responded lightly. Not once, either, did he allude to Joyce Moore again, so Ethel could not know what his feelings were. She did not care—she was completely satisfied now that events had taken a for-



tuitous turn. So they chatted and he asked questions and she answered them, and presently he left her.

The news of Malcolm Travers' engagement to another girl had, as he would have expressed it, flattened him. Yet he was grateful for Ethel's tactfulness in presenting it as she did. He wondered what had happened. Basil Torrens was not the sort of man to be an abject lover, and he recalled Joyce's honest answer to his question over three years before. "I love Malcolm Travers as much as I shall ever love anybody," she had said. He had been very much attracted by her. The years that had passed since then had rendered her image faint, so that if he were asked if he still loved her, he would have had to answer that he didn't know. The fact of finding his dear mother's grave so cared for had roused interest in the dark, proud girl once more—for Joyce had been more than fond of his invalid mother. Ethel's light remark about the proximity of the two graves had made him sure that he owed this tender attention to one whom he had come to think of as Malcolm Travers' wife. Malcolm Travers had always been the barrier. Now, evidently, that barrier had been removed—unless she still cared.

And the second barrier? It had appeared of slight importance three years ago. It loomed big before him now, for he had seen much of simple

self-sacrifice; he had seen what comfort religion means to men and women, and how the shepherd of a flock is willing to pour out his time, his energy, his very blood to give its consolations to all who need them. Basil Torrens was a Catholic—Joyce Moore was nothing. In the heart of the great desert, in the bowels of the earth, in moments when death and disaster threatened, he had found out what God means to man.

But he had cared a great deal in the old days for the good things of life, and thought very little of life's sacrifices. Men had suffered and died since then for an ideal. He had seen one man, old before his time, *live* for his ideal, and endure unbelievable hardships. He had a new sense of the reality of existence—he took God into his reckoning. When he had left, with his friend Clarke, to finish his training and gain new ideas in bridge-building, he had not thought that he was also going to forge and hammer himself a character. He had spent twenty-two months on the fringe of the desert after Clarke's death in his arms, to complete the work they had both begun. He never wanted to return to the day of three years before—he wondered if he would if he remained here—where the world went on in such carefully regulated style, where a dinner like this of Ethel Chamberlin's was planned for as if it were a matter of life and death.

And supposing, he thought, as he swung along

the street on his way to the club, supposing that he still cared? And she...could be made to care? What then? Could he, would he, return to this—the Chamberlin dinner world—to smile a little and jibe a little at all the things he had come to regard as of most importance? Or would she be willing to throw it all overboard... and go back with him..... to the silent desert, the lonely mountains, the wild ruggedness of nature untamed, which it was his privilege and duty to mold to the use of man? . . . . .

Before Mrs. Emory dressed she slipped into Cecil's room, and a warm feeling of satisfied pride stirred her heart as she looked at the girlish figure in its shimmering gown of blue that made the gold of her hair a halo, and paled into silver in the deeper blue of her eyes.

"Pretty," she said briefly.

"I like it," said Cecil.

"You will wear Malcolm's flowers?"

"I'd rather not. I never wear flowers."

"Don't be absurd. Wear them. It will please him to see them on you."

"If you think so—" The maid lifted the delicate sprays of lilies-of-the-valley from the box. "I'll go down to Colin and father while you are dressing."

"Do. I shall be ready directly."

Colin and his father were in the library, and Colin's critical eye swept her from top to toe.



"Stunning," he said. "They don't make 'em any prettier than you, Cecil."

A slight flush rose to her face; her father put up his hand and patted her shoulder.

"You little darling!" he said, with a satisfied chuckle. "Leave it to your mother! What is it to be—the diamond tiara or pearls for a wedding gift? The pearls will cost more."

"Whatever you choose," she said, "when the wedding—happens."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"I don't know what you have to complain of," said Colin. He was too self-centered to know when to let well enough alone.

"I'm not complaining," she said. "I don't intend ever to complain again."

"I wish I could believe you, Cecil," he answered. "It means a terrible lot to your only little brother. Muriel and I have discussed the thing thoroughly, and she agrees with me. We shall marry, eventually, of course—but it is better to do it with the approval of all concerned."

"Muriel Carter isn't a Catholic, Colin."

"Good gracious!" Colin's feet came down on the floor. "I'm not marrying the religion, I'm marrying the girl."

"But Colin—"

"I don't see that it makes one bit of difference.



For heaven's sake where do you think you are living—in the convent?"

"That will do, Colin," said his father, quietly.

"She should have stayed there if she wanted to go around with a face like this," muttered Colin doggedly.

"Had I wanted to remain in the convent I would not have come home," said Cecil gently. "There was no choice, Colin."

Thomas Emory bent his eyes to the rug, for Cecilia's words made him uneasy. He realized how completely he had grown away from the standards of the Faith. It was the easiest thing in the world to be swayed by his strong-willed wife, and to fall in with her ambitious plans, to lean on her keen judgment and to take her good advice, which had never led him astray. But Cecilia transported him to another sphere; she stirred a dormant conscience into life—a guilty conscience. He wished, impatiently, that she would not talk like this...that she would forget...once in a while — His wife's voice was a pleasant interruption.

"I hope it hasn't been tiresome for you people," she said smoothly. She was dignified and stately, and wore a single jewel on her black gown—a jewel that would have established a credit rating immediately for Thomas Emory had such been necessary. Arms and hands were bare, save for her wedding-

ring—only that one beautiful gem, at which even Colin blinked.

“It hasn’t been tiresome,” said Tom Emory, but his mood crept through his voice—a disagreeable mood. “Let us be going.”

Colin drew his sister back out of their hearing.

“When did you get that?” he asked, pointing to her ring.

“Yesterday afternoon,” she answered.

“And you set the wedding-day?” He was eager, hopeful.

She made no answer. She was like a trapped squirrel, doomed to spend its little life treading a wooden wheel. Her mother’s ambition, her father’s indifference, her brother’s selfishness, were overpowering. Yet all were wrong. She was wrong to listen, wrong to temporize. She was fighting not alone for her life’s happiness, but her soul’s future, and there was no one to help her. She must fight it out alone, unsupported by anyone. And to leave it? Where would she go? No wonder Senator Hayden laughed at her. She had no refuge—no real friend—she would be heartsick, homesick—

A sudden flash of anger drove the mist from her eyes. She *was* the daughter of this indomitable, proud, ambitious, worldly woman. She had strength of purpose, too, and principles which the older woman had forgotten! “And,” said Mother Philippa, “one can’t walk straight on a crooked road; or think

straight with a crooked mind; or love God with a crooked heart." Were her feet set on a crooked road? Perhaps. But her mind and her heart were straight, and she would retrace her steps. She did not yet know how—but the opportunity would arise and she would take it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FATHER PAT AND OLD ERIN

THEY were neither late nor early when they reached the Chamberlins—Mrs. Emory could be depended upon for that. The Smith-Sheridans and the Harrisons were there, with Muriel Carter and Basil Torrens. The Teddy-Barnards always came in at the last minute. Ethel Chamberlin, bubbling with gaiety, greeted Mr. and Mrs. Emory, and both she and Muriel turned then to Cecilia with words of felicitations.

“You are a darling,” said Muriel effusively. “I was so *delighted* when I read it yesterday—though, of course, we’ve all been expecting it! And you’ll make such a handsome couple! Malcolm is so dark and you—you shine like a star, a snow-lily! Doesn’t she, Colin? I don’t see how you can think any girl pretty after your dear sister!”

“Perhaps I don’t,” he said, teasingly, and Cecilia Emory caught the deeper note in his voice. He was so different with Muriel Carter. He rejoiced in his complete subjugation—the more remarkable in one so frigidly, so obviously proper. All the world could look on—he was proud of being outrageously in love. This was another reason why such men as



Paul Chamberlin detested him, though Paul had not noticed his devotion until this evening. Now it amused him, and he joked about it under his breath to Tom Emory, who joked back, quite content and satisfied. None of them had the faintest idea that Cecilia was squirming under Muriel's words. And that was but the beginning. Mrs. Smith-Sheridan had seized on Mrs. Emory, and smiling and bowing in a mechanical fashion Cecilia at last found herself gazing up at what she thought an enormous man—a young man who gazed down at her. He had the biggest smile, showing the whitest and strongest teeth she had ever seen; hazel eyes, too, with funny little wrinkles at the corners that looked as if they were made because the eyes were always smiling.

"Mr. ———" she repeated questioningly, for Ethel had darted away and left them together.

"Torrens...Basil Torrens..." What a little thing she was, Cecilia Mary Emory! And what *blue* eyes. He liked the name. It fitted her; it fitted the flower-like face.

"I wish you joy, Miss Emory," he said. "Everyone seems to be doing that."

"Yes," she answered, "everyone." She glanced toward the doorway expectantly. Her one friend, the one who could really help her through, would soon put in an appearance. And even as she thought this, she heard Ethel Chamberlin's laughing voice.

"Doctor's orders, he wrote me—and at once. He's

going back to his home town—owns a ranch out there, I believe. Senator Hayden hasn't been a well man for years... Yes... he does take excellent care of himself, but he won't return for some time now. I understand his last attack was very severe."

Basil Torrens was not paying attention; his eyes were on Cecilia's face, across which there shot a look of such disappointment that he, having no trace of its source, turned his gaze also in the direction of the door. And there stood, to his complete astonishment, Malcolm Travers himself! Malcolm Travers, who was approaching, laughingly parrying the merry chaff that was flung at him from all sides, who came nearer now, and caught Cecilia's hand in his and held it, his eyes apparently seeing nothing but her, apologies on his lips.

"Oh, Cecil, I am so sorry!" he began as he reached her side. "We had a break-down, and when I got hold of a taxi it was only to be caught in a jam at Broadway. Have they made it too hard for you?"

"Oh, no," she answered. "I didn't care." There was a queer fluttering in her throat. Subtly she sensed that these people had at last made up their minds to accept her as one of themselves, that Malcolm Travers had drawn her through the portals. She thought of her mother, then, and raised her eyes to find her mother's dark orbs bent upon her. An elated face, she thought, the eyes flashing, the lips curved. Did her mother sense that, too? Very

quietly she slipped her fingers from that warm clasp. Only then did Travers seem to have a glance for anyone else, and now it rested on the big man, who was waiting for his recognition.

"Torrens! How in the world did you happen to turn up here? This is fine! And how well you look! I've heard they grow things big in Kansas, but you mustn't have started to grow until you got there."

"Only I didn't happen to be in Kansas," said Basil Torrens.

"You've met—Miss Emory?"

"Yes. I congratulate you with all my heart, Malcolm, and I hope you will be very happy." They shook hands warmly. "As for being here—just my usual luck, and Paul and Ethel's considerate pity!" He laughed again and Cecilia glanced at him with admiration. He looked like an outdoor man; she was quite sure he'd be perfectly at home roughing it... Ethel Chamberlin came up then. The Barnards, always the very last to appear, had arrived, and Joyce Moore was still missing. She was getting a little nervous, though no one could guess that from her appearance as she took up Malcolm Travers' last words, overheard, and teased Basil Torrens on his Western air. And almost at that instant a hush seemed to fall on the group. Just a second it lasted, as if all in that room took a deep breath. Joyce Moore stood on the threshold, gazing



about her with smiling graciousness. All trace of the hysterical attack of the day before had disappeared. She was Joyce Moore, attractive, handsome, gracious of air and queenly of habit. Basil Torrens stood staring at her. He could not discern the difference of a day in her. She was as beautiful as she had ever been, but—and he realized it with a shock—her beauty no longer drew him! His were the eyes of a stranger, yet never had she seemed so lovely! Ethel Chamberlin greeted her, walking beside her half the length of the room.

“You have saved me a bad moment—I was just beginning to worry.” She lowered her voice. “Basil Torrens returned yesterday. You are to sit with him.”

Joyce smiled vaguely—as if the name meant nothing, as if she did not know that Ethel was offering her a plank in shipwreck. She was, they all thought, the jilted maiden. Her lips curved. As if it mattered what they thought! Cecilia, after that first glimpse of her, drew back and cast a furtive glance at Malcolm Travers. His face was impassive; he was smiling. But Cecilia felt that something had tightened within him like a taut string...was it that odd inflation of the nostrils...

“I have met Miss Emory before...yes,” said Joyce Moore, charmingly. “And Malcolm, I saw the announcement yesterday. I hope you will be very happy. Basil!” Her smile did not vary in its



friendliness. "So you've found New York again? Has the desert palled?"

"Not yet. . . I mean to return. This is but a business trip." Malcolm turned then, with a laughing remark, to Cecilia, and stood aside with her, focusing his attention on her. And every one of the four knew that all eyes were intent and all ears attuned. But there was no time for further observation. Dinner was announced, and the guests were engaged in finding their places. Ethel drew a deep breath—so far, so good! At least the ice had been broken.

Cecilia was self-possessed enough, but she was mortally tired. She was always silent, and this silence had won her her reputation for stupidity. It was her refuge. A slow tide of indignation was rising within her—succeeding her depression. She had nothing in common with them—neither her father, nor her mother, nor her lover. Lover! Her lips curled. What a name to give a man of whom she thought so little! *Husband?* His cold determination, his domineering manner yesterday—how it lingered with her—when, with stern mien, he had thought to awe her, forever robbed him of any chance of bearing that name. What! Exchange one tyrant for another? Never, never! She would escape from all tyranny!

With the starting of the meal Ethel Chamberlin began to talk rapidly to Mrs. Smith-Sheridan, who was at the other end of the table. Mrs. Emory,

grown uncomfortable, was aware of the embarrassment of their hostess, and knowing its cause, Malcolm Travers was plainly amused. If Cecilia chose, in that frank and uncommon way, to bring a blessing on her food in the house of Dives, why not? She was his affianced wife, and as that, even now, she could do exactly as she pleased. What amused him most was the fact that Cecilia, the stupid and inane as they called her, in this one thing was like adamant. He reveled in the expression on Mrs. Emory's face—and Colin's. Slowly, quietly, her hand rose—to forehead, to breast, to both shoulders, palms touching then an instant for its closing, the lids drooped, the head bent slightly. And Malcolm Travers, watching her, knew that if ever it was in his power to love Cecilia Emory it would be because of this supreme disregard for human respect. Joyce Moore, observing her, was startled, and a smile flashed over her face, like the ripple on a stream. There was a swift exchange of glances. Little Mrs. Barnard bent quickly above her plate. Not an action, not a look was lost. Even Torrens stared.

"Why," he exclaimed, involuntarily, to Joyce Moore, "is—is Miss Emory a Catholic?"

"Didn't you know it?"

"No, I didn't. She's a stranger to me."

"Superstitious, evidently," answered the other girl, in a careless tone. "Why does she do that? Of what is she afraid?"

"Afraid?" He looked at her in astonishment. "That's a strange question. She is beginning her meal in the name of God, the Giver of all good gifts."

"Good gracious, is that it?" The words were contemptuous. "I thought it was something like that sign they use in Sicily—the horn, do they call it?—to keep away the evil eye. One never can tell what these Catholics believe."

Basil Torrens smiled at her warningly, remembering, with some astonishment, that even this would not have annoyed him in the girl he had thought he loved three years ago! And now—oh, it mattered very much indeed!

"I am one, too, Joyce," he said. "And you ought to be one. You have an Irish-Catholic name."

"What's in a name, I ask to know, Mr. Torrens? And there are different sorts."

"Only two—the good ones and the bad ones."

"Please don't try to intimate that you are a—good one!"

"I'm betwixt and between," he said, and they laughed, and at the sound of Joyce Moore's musical laughter, Malcolm Travers' eyelids quivered ever so slightly, his glance turning toward her. How beautiful she was to him! There wasn't another woman in the world like her. Torrens had paid her faithful attention three years ago—it was Torrens' proximity and devotion that had made him insist on their engage-



ment. And now Torrens could act as he willed . . . the road was clear . . . But was any road clear for any man where Joyce Moore was concerned?

"Tell me," Joyce Moore was saying, "have you enjoyed your change of surroundings? And don't the comforts of home have strong appeal after doing without them so long?"

"I've grown new lungs in the air of the West," said Basil Torrens. "That for one thing. And the people are more honest. . . I don't mean my own are dishonest—but we tell the truth—"

"Wanderer! And the women—"

He hesitated.

"I refuse to commit myself there," he said. She laughed again, and Malcolm Travers heard.

"I met a Mr. Sanderson at Harrisons' two months ago," she said, pushing her glass to and fro with graceful fingers. "He was telling us something of your mining work, and the death of an engineer—Ray Clarke. Did you know Ray Clarke?"

"I worked with him," he said gravely.

"Of course. And this Sanderson said Basil Torrens was the only man who could tell the story of Shaft No. 3. It is an epic. So I made up my mind to hear it—if I ever met you again."

"Heaven save me from my friends!" said Basil with a grin. "Some day, perhaps, I may tell you the story, but not now. It's too gruesome. And



Sanderson's a newspaper man—why didn't *he* tell it?"

"He said he was under solemn promise not to—"

"Oh! To the papers. But to you—"

Her eyes met his daringly: "I choose to hear it from the one who has the best right to tell it."

"Look here, Joyce," said Basil Torrens, "suppose we talk of something pleasant—you, for instance."

"Something pleasant? Myself, for instance?" Again she laughed, and Ethel Chamberlin looked at her almost enviously. Time wasted to pity Joyce Moore! Not even Ethel, with all her training, could simulate that laugh of pure amusement. At least she and Torrens were getting on.

"I have no objections to being called that," she said, "but there is surely something pleasanter still. Now... Travers and Miss Emory? Or Colin Emory and the fair Muriel, at whom, when she thinks no one is looking, Ethel glowers as if she thoroughly disapproves—"

"I know Colin Emory. He attended some lectures in Washington about five years ago. He is really clever."

"But for his affliction—an inflated brain," said Joyce Moore, and Basil's smile broadened. "He has never been properly handled, but he is coming to that state rapidly. Muriel has only one object of worship, and all must pay homage. If Mr. Colin

Emory does not make proper obeisance, she will send him on his lonely way."

There was no sting in the words, only the best of good nature, and he enjoyed it, for Joyce had a droll manner that lent aid to her purpose of being amusing. Malcolm Travers, devoting himself to the quiet, reserved girl at his side, absolutely forcing her into conversation in order to cover her reticence, felt curiously out of it. All at that table knew and appreciated Joyce Moore's quaint raillery, but he had loved it. Everyone was so happy, so seemingly content; Ethel Chamberlin was beaming. Had Cecilia lifted her blue eyes to Malcolm Travers' face, and repeated the thought that flashed into her brain she might have startled him. "The operation was a great success—but the patient died." The dinner was evidently a great success, too, but Cecil knew. She knew the unrest in Colin's heart, the ambition in her mother's; she knew that her father, act as he might to the contrary, was out of his element, in spite of his attempt to play the gallant to smiling Mrs. Chamberlin. And Joyce Moore... and Malcolm Travers...

She caught Malcolm Travers' eyes fixed on her with a peculiar expression, then. She tried to exert herself to join in the light talk. A stupid dinner partner, she, indeed! She could have laughed at that...How little she cared! Perhaps after a while she could meet Joyce Moore and talk to her.

She would probably freeze her to death. "But," thought Cecil, with a half-smile at her own conceit, "I'm so used to being frozen that I think I could be comfortable at the North Pole." She found herself, at last, seated beside the fireplace, and she saw that Joyce Moore and Malcolm Travers were standing together just inside the door. She smiled suddenly and settled back.

Basil Torrens, gazing down at her, thought she looked like a very little girl who had been caught in some mischief.

"May I sit here?" he asked.

"Why, of course." She saw him glance about the room, quickly, and knew that his eyes, too, had rested on the couple at the door, for his glance came back, very thoughtful.

"I want to tell you that you made me feel a bit ashamed of myself, Miss Emory."

"I?" she questioned. "Oh, why?"

"At the way in which you so openly acknowledged your Faith—*our* Faith," he added.

"*Our* Faith? Are you a Catholic?"

"I am."

"Why, that is fine!"

"Well, perhaps it isn't so fine. I used to think it was fine—once. But tonight I discovered, for the first time in my life, that I am a moral coward."

"That's not a nice thing to say of one's self. But I'm a coward, too."

"Not in my way. I could not lift my hand to my forehead if—"

"Oh, Mr. Torrens! The sign of the Cross. Is that it?"

"Yes. It was—refreshing."

"Refreshing—to you? To me it means only one thing. It separates me from all the people in this room."

He gave her a startled glance. Her blue eyes met his calmly.

"You tell the truth there, Miss Emory," he said.

"It is the one thing that will keep from being signed, sealed and ratified," she said. "I cannot see your life as you see it. I am—too dull. And therein lies my happiness."

He looked at her, amused.

"You feel too serious for this sort of thing? But, this is their playtime, Miss Emory. Youth is always serious. It is a fault you will recover from as you grow older."

She shrank.

"I am not preaching. I do not know these people. They are probably very decent people, and good, too. Only I am out of my element."

"You think it is your religion? There are many Catholics—"

"It's my training—everything seems wasted. What are women for?"



"To make the men of the world happy, and to help them to be good." He spoke cynically.

Cecilia laughed.

"Well—that is one definition." She was silent a few seconds. "How long have you been a Catholic, Mr. Torrens?"

"I was always one. It was an inheritance from my father."

"And you find it difficult?"

"Very difficult at times. Particularly at Easter and Christmas—when conscience takes its revenge."

"Why should you be bothered at Easter and Christmas?"

"I go to confession then. It has always been my practice to do so."

"Practice! Easter and Christmas! Oh! Is *that* the kind of Catholic you are?"

The surprised note of disapproval in her voice nettled him.

"One would imagine that kind of Catholic didn't count!" he said.

"Oh, it counts, I suppose. At least you've a chance...if anything happens to you."

"You're upsetting my peace of mind, Miss Emory!"

"You see? I didn't mean to be rude, but I don't know how to be—well, I call it insincere," she said. "I have illustrated my meaning, Mr. Torrens, at your expense. One must be pleasantly polite, no matter

what one thinks. Now you, for instance; I should not have said that to you. In business, few men, I imagine, have time for religion."

"I do not know," he said slowly. "I have been but recently in a Nevada mining camp, and there were a number of men there of our Faith. They were very busy men, too—but none of us missed hearing mass when it was possible to do so, and the busiest of all used to arrange the altars for Father Pat when he came. Father Pat was a big, bluff, hearty, white-haired old priest, Miss Emory, and, strange to say, his last name was the same as your own—Emory."

"Father Patrick Emory!" Cecil said the name over. "Isn't that—fine?"

"But of course he isn't a relative. He's from Connemara, and proud of it."

Cecil's eyes glowed.

"My father is a Connemara man," she said, and her simplicity would have sent Mrs. Emory into a spasm. "And he had brothers, too, for I often heard him talk of them before—some time since," she added, "before I went to college. Wouldn't it be strange...if we were relatives? And wouldn't I be glad? A priest! Actually a priest!" Her voice thrilled, her hands clasped excitedly. "If ever I thought we had a priest in our own family I'd want to die with joy!"

Basil Torrens was not easily moved, and his first

impulse had been to laugh. But as she ended her sentence pity seized him.

"You poor little waif!" he thought. "What in the world are you doing here? No wonder—" Aloud he said: "Where were you educated, Miss Emory?"

"With the Ursulines," she answered, and then looked up at him. "Please don't tell me my place is in the convent; if it were I wouldn't be here. The trouble with us is that we don't like to speak of our religion. We—keep it locked in a bureau drawer," a look of mischief flashed into her eyes, "or renew our passports...or safeguards...at Easter and Christmas time, and then wonder why we are moral cowards!"

"Well!" he floundered. "Well!" He could not reply to that and the pity of the moment before became something else. She was not thinking of his feelings in the least.

"Father Patrick Emory...Pat Emory!" She repeated the words as if she loved them.

"He has a gray mare he calls Old Erin," continued Basil Torrens, smiling slightly. "Just a sleepy, good-natured horse that can trot steadily for seven days and seven nights a week and sleep going! Father Pat does the same. He and Old Erin are always together."

The description fascinated her.

"Would you grant me one favor, Mr. Torrens?" she implored. "Tell me how I may address him?"



"I have the exact directions at hand," he said, "in my bag at the club." He had them in his brain, too, if he had cared to repeat them then. "Permit me to bring them to you—tomorrow afternoon?"

"No—not tomorrow afternoon. I have an engagement. But the day following, unless you prefer to send them to me."

"Would you deprive me of the pleasure of bringing them to you?" he asked.

Both he and she had forgotten that she was the promised bride of another. She flashed him a beaming glance.

"Perhaps I shall share the pleasure, too," she said. "It will be nice to see you again—"

"Why, Miss Emory—I—"

"There are at least a dozen things I want to find out—about Father Pat and Old Erin," she added.

"And if I can interest you in them, perhaps you will extend your interest to—"

"Should the story be worth while I can promise even that."

Basil Torrens drew a deep breath.

"I wonder," he said, as he thought of that girl whom all called whatever name it pleased them, "I wonder how she manages to keep it up? Supposing they ever discover what is really going on behind that forehead of hers?" . . .

"My word," said Colin to his sister on the way home, "but you are coming on! I haven't seen you



so interested in some time. What was your giant saying to you?"

"What was he saying to me?" Cecil sat up straight in the car, and her eyes snapped. "Why, he asked me how much my father paid for Malcolm Travers—and why we didn't keep him chained when Miss Moore was around!"

There were three distinct varieties of gasps at that.

"Cecil," said her mother, "that is—vulgar."

"The truth, dear Mother," said Cecil, "very often is."

And not one of them said another word.

## CHAPTER IX

### CECILIA AND MOTHER PHILIPPA

CECILIA'S appointment for the following afternoon was with Mother Philippa. No person in the world better understood another than this nun understood Cecilia Emory. Perhaps she understood her the better because she herself was slow of speech, reticent, thoughtful. But her interest was keen, her observation more keen. She was short, stout, wearing heavy glasses that made her small gray eyes appear even smaller. Her mouth was firm and well-cut, her nose prominent. At first glance the casual observer ignored Mother Philippa. She was "just a nun," who had certain duties to perform, who was methodical, painstaking, extremely careful. As to what Mother Philippa was underneath, well, that is scarcely part of this story, save as it bears on Cecilia Emory's. From the first sight of Elizabeth Garvan Emory, almost seven years before, and the slim flower-like girl who was her daughter, Mother Philippa was interested. She had never seen a greater contrast. And it is of a piece with all the wonderful things which she accomplished in her long life to say that she dissected Cecilia Emory's character bit by bit, and realized that she must build the foundation first and then the structure. It would be

years before Cecilia Emory discovered herself—but when she did she would be a woman worth while. It was for this girl that the nun, knowing so well the life that Mrs. Emory was planning, had coined the phrase that formed the aim of Cecilia's everyday course of living.

"Well, my dear," she said, in her quiet manner, "I gave you part of my Office yesterday and today. It is three months since you've been here."

"Yes, Mother," said the girl, linking her arm fondly in the nun's—she had never outgrown her school-girl habit, "but I'm positively twenty years older."

"Now that will bear talking about," said Mother Philippa, "and not indoors, either. Twenty years older! Then you're a fraud, Cecil."

"And a wicked one," said the girl. "Oh, come, Mother, let's get away. I have so much to ask you."

"We'll go into the courtyard, then," she said. "I feel the need of exercise these days, my child. Your teacher is getting old and fat."

"There's a fraud, if you like," said Cecil. "You can't ever grow old, Mother Philippa. Fifty years from now I'll crawl up that front door with a cane—and Mother Philippa will meet me...and say she is getting old and fat!"

"Of course, Cecil, if you want to poke fun at me—"

"I don't, Mother Philippa, but I'm in a mess, and I think it's my own fault, and if you say it is—well, then, I'll want to lie down and die; that's all there is to it. And I never felt so abominably wicked in my whole life. I'm all bottled up inside, and if I don't get some of it off my mind at once I'll—I'll—"

"I won't say you're a fraud again, Cecil—but I will admit the twenty years if you talk like that," said Mother Philippa, with a smile. "Here we are, my dear, so uncork the bottle at once before the explosion."

"Mother, look at that!"

Cecilia held out her hand, and the afternoon sunshine glistened through the maple trees and fell on the sparkling stone that adorned her third finger.

Mother looked—her gray eyes narrowing.

"You're engaged to be married, Cecil? And I suppose he isn't a Catholic?"

Cecil laughed.

"No, Mother—not that. He *is* a Catholic, though not a very good one, but—" She paused a moment. "Well, it would be better to begin right at the start. His name is Travers—Malcolm Travers. I met him about two months ago at an affair given by people named Chamberlin. I believe this affair was our first step over the parapets of the inner fortress—at least Mother expressed it that way. Mr. Chamberlin and Father were going into some deal together, and though it seems we had been declared 'impos-



sible' not so long before, it was found, to the interest of all concerned, that such a word didn't exist. You quite understand, Mother?"

Mother understood, perfectly.

"Somehow or other, Mr. Travers was introduced, and I thought him rather nice. I hadn't the faintest idea that he would care for me, but it seems—he did. He succumbed instantly to the sea-blue of my eyes, the sunrise of my hair, the coral of my lips, the—well, he was at my feet, anyhow, and my mother—" She drew her breath quickly.

And again Mother Philippa understood.

"I liked him. He is handsome—he is courteous—he is distant of manner—he is pleasant. I never imagined a lover better suited to my ideas, if I had any, than he. So, with Mother's blessing, I gave him my word."

"You mean he asked you to marry him and you consented."

"Yes. Just that. You understand I wasn't thinking of getting married when I gave that promise—but I knew I would have to and since he seemed so devoted and so satisfied and it made everyone so happy...I was really pleased at the agreement. Now there may have been comments made before me about certain things that had occurred previous to my existence. Of course, I am not supposed to have lived outside this charmed circle. But I made, just then, a few casual acquaintances—among them

a girl named Gladys Evans—and it was from her I first learned of Joyce Moore.”

“And Joyce Moore is—”

“Joyce Moore is the girl to whom, for three years, Malcolm Travers was engaged to be married. This engagement was broken—by her—before he asked me. And it seems that Senator Hayden, our old friend—you know Senator Hayden?”—yes, Mother Philippa knew him well—“didn’t approve of it at all. He said it was all for money—it was wrong—that Joyce and Malcolm are still very much in love with each other and that all sorts of trouble might arise if I married him. He said—my mother does not deny it—that it was really Father’s riches which were more powerful than the glamour of my sea-blue eyes and my sunrise hair, Mother Philippa.”

The nun was silent an instant.

“You are hurt, then, dear, and grieved...is that it? And a little resentful?”

“No. I wish I were. Instead I find that I am very happy at the discovery, and overjoyed to think that I can rid myself of—well, of what I feel is an obligation that had begun to annoy me. I didn’t have one quiet minute after that in which I gave my promise. I was constantly tormented, and worried, and anxious. The news was like a reprieve to a man condemned. It gave me an excuse. You know my mother—”

Once more Mother Philippa understood. She had understood for seven years.

"There is more, Cecil?"

"Yes. I told my mother and father. I told Senator Hayden. I told Malcolm Travers himself. The first were frightfully displeased; the second was, I think, amused and a little credulous, the third absolutely refused to allow me to break with him. The engagement is announced. All our friends have congratulated us, and now I must set the wedding-day. And I might remark that Colin, engaged to Muriel Carter, who is *in* the circle, has begged and implored me to do nothing at all until his affair is settled. And I don't believe Colin has as much religion in him as would cover the head of a pin."

Cecilia could talk. Mother Philippa knew it. There were few others who had ever discovered it.

"Only for Senator Hayden you might have just as little," she said.

"I know that—yes, I'm sure of it. I owe my education to Senator Hayden's insistence. And my chief fault is that I want to take the easiest way always."

Mother Philippa nodded.

"Exactly, Cecil. It is this fault of yours that is responsible now. You have made a regrettable mistake."

Cecilia felt as if a cold wind were blowing on her.





ONCE MORE MOTHER PHILIPPA UNDERSTOOD





"You did wrong ever to give your promise," said Mother Philippa, "but you would do a greater wrong to that young man and yourself to keep it. Marriage without sincere affection on both sides, without a perfect agreement to receive this Sacrament as God meant it to be received, to His honor and glory, and for the purposes for which matrimony was instituted, would be a sacrilege. Cecil, you must frankly and firmly go to your parents and in their presence and in the presence of this young man—the three together—you must confess your mistake and break your promise."

Cecilia drew free from Mother Philippa and threw both arms about her, kissing her again and again.

"Child, child, you're choking me!" said the nun, surprised. "What in the world—"

"Don't you see, darling Mother Philippa, I was worried about the moral end of it. I was afraid I might have an obligation—"

"But why didn't you bring it up in confession? The Father would have settled it immediately."

"Somehow, Mother, I didn't want to speak of it in confession."

Mother Philippa's brows met.

"Why, Cecil?"

"I—I couldn't get the words out."

Mother Philippa's lips shut tightly. Cecilia pressed closer to her.

"Mother—you're disappointed."

"Yes, Cecil. Child, you've got to take a firm stand in the world! Haven't I told you so? Haven't I shown you just what will happen to you if you allow people to ride over your good judgment? Cecil, you must learn to stand on your own feet! What is going to become of you? Here you have given your promise to contract a marriage from which you shrink—and yet, if you do not assert your desire for freedom, you will actually go on with it. I know you! And unless you are persuaded, fully, that this is a marriage in Christ and in the Church, how dare you undertake it?"

"Dear Mother Philippa, I don't think I saw quite clearly, but I do want to say that I have fully determined *never* to go on with it. I want to tell you that my people would rather *bury* me than see me give him up. My mother writhes if I say one word. My father sets his mouth and looks at me. My brother—"

"Look here, Cecil. You're planning something. What is it?"

"Mother Philippa, I'm going to—leave home—for a while."

"A cowardly thing, Cecil."

"No, Mother. True discretion."

Then Mother Philippa knew that the hard part of the battle had just begun.

"Cecil, dear, the girl who leaves her home—"

Cecil's hand tightened on her arm.

"Some time ago, when Renie Ward and I left college together, I promised her I would pay her a long visit. Last year I promised again. She is up in the Vermont Mountains. I intend to write to Renie Ward and ask her to give me a chance to accept her invitation."

"But with your parents' consent, dear child."

"Mother, darling, if my tickets are bought and I am on the train, they can't refuse."

"I still protest that you must do the honorable thing. Don't you see that even if this young man has refused to break his engagement to you, if you give him up in the presence of your parents, his own pride will compel him to accept your word?"

"Why," said Cecil, slowly, "I believe...you're right."

"Of course I am," said Mother Philippa, encouraged.

"Nevertheless, I will write to Renie, in case—"

"Oh, I have no doubt it will be pleasant to get away for a while. Write to Renie—though I know Renie so well that I am sure you could wire her this very minute and start with the wire. She needs no preparation to welcome you, Cecil."

"No, Mother Philippa," said Cecil Emory. "Renie is one of those true-blue people that one needn't see for twenty years, but who will just take up the threads again as if Time didn't matter."

"Time doesn't matter to real friendship, Cecil."



"But, Mother, darling, I shall write to Renie *first*—before I say anything at home. I want something back of me—some place in readiness." She shuddered. "My mother will — Well, Renie is miles from a railroad, and yet, you know, Mother would not hesitate to drag me away from there if she could without creating any scandal."

"Can't you resolve to stay and face it, Cecil? After all, a mistake isn't a sin, as the good old Father used to remark."

"Listen, Mother Philippa—I am on a crooked road."

"That can always be remedied."

"I'm finding the remedy now. And don't worry; you won't have to bear the moral responsibility alone, because I'm going to confession tomorrow and will settle that part. I have some money—Father has been very generous—so I shall not want for that. I am not frivolous—"

"There are so many dangers in the world, child! And with your"—she was about to say beauty, but amended it. "You are so young!"

"Yes—at twenty-two years old—I am young!" Cecil laughed. "Let's change the conversation right now, dear Mother. I can't tell you how you have helped me, and I'll see it through."

Cecilia went home almost light-hearted, and that evening, before dinner, a letter was sent to Renie Ward. The very mailing of the letter made her more

light-hearted still, and she visibly showed it, so that Mrs. Emory, looking at her and listening to her gay voice, was more than gratified. To her it appeared as if Cecilia had at last become reconciled, and that her dreams would come true!

She was making afternoon calls when Basil Torrens paid his promised visit and he and the girl were quite alone for an hour. She was deeply interested in everything he had to tell her of the great West and of the good old priest, Father Pat Emory, and she made him describe the big Irishman again and again to her. Some of the stories, too, that he told her were such examples of ready wit and courage that Cecilia was charmed. She forgot herself, listening enraptured, her blue eyes glistening, her lips parted; and Basil Torrens could scarcely conceal his admiration.

"I wish you *were* Father Pat's niece," he said, "and could pay a long, long visit to Silver Lode. And that I was back at work at the same time to show you the wonders of the Sage-brush State—the deep valleys, the glorious mountains crowned with snow, the long trails, the little nooks and crannies which have, perhaps, been waiting for your foot since God created them."

His voice thrilled her—her lids half closed.

"Oh," she breathed, "it sounds like a fairy-tale."

"Yes," he said, slowly, "like a fairy-tale. And oh, Miss Cecil, fairy-tales never come true!"

"Don't you think some of them—might?"

He pointed to her hand, on which glittered Malcolm Travers' ring.

"This can't; you belong to someone else," he said.

She looked at him, startled.

"I mean," he added, rather hastily, "that a visit to Father Pat of Silver Lode can never be anything but a fairy-tale to you."

"How long were you away, Mr. Torrens?"

"Over three years. I saw the chance and took it. Besides, my invalid mother had just died, and I was glad to get off."

"And now are you glad to get back?"

"I can't say that I am. I thought myself really desperately in love three years ago, and I went away to forget."

"You—forgot?"

"Yes."

"Then, of course, you only imagined you were in love?"

"Perhaps so. Perhaps the man I was then *was* desperately in love. I have changed a great deal, I think. I was much attracted by this girl, but she was promised to another. So I drew out, of course, and the years of work and adventures, too, have helped to put her aside. In fact, when I thought of her at all it was as the happy wife of the man of her choice. It was a surprise to hear she had not married.

And then—" he hesitated then, to ask himself why he spoke to her in this intimate fashion. Her gaze was so earnest, so thoughtful. "Why," he exclaimed, "you have Father Pat's eyes!"

"Father Pat's eyes!" She echoed the words. "Well, never mind," she said, "just please keep on."

He showed his embarrassment. "I found out that the attraction no longer existed. Her beauty and her wit had charmed me. She is still as beautiful and as witty—"

"But?"

"She does not belong to us. And when I saw you make the sign of the Cross—" he did not, nor could he ever, add Joyce Moore's comment on Cecil's action—"then I knew she would never belong to us."

"But perhaps she cares for you?"

"No, and she never did. And I am quite cured, so we can be good friends."

"That's what I call a lovely ending," said Cecil. She sighed a little. "It's ever so much nicer to be friends than anything else. And I'm sure that even if this Father Emory isn't a relative he'll be a friend. And maybe some day I shall see him, and if all you've told me is true, I shall like him very much."

"I've only told you half, and if he isn't a relative . . . Your eyes are exactly the same shade—they have the same expression; little boy's eyes, his, set in a rugged, weather-beaten face."

Cecil smiled happily.



"You're raising my hopes," she said. "My father used to call me the child with his mother's eyes, and he said that his oldest brother was the only one in the family that had inherited them from her. But now I won't dare think of it. It is too good to be true."

They were interrupted by Mrs. Emory, and Basil Torrens glanced at the clock in dismay. He had stayed beyond all the bounds of good manners. He made his adieux at once, and Cecil's mother was more than gracious. She had heard some excellent stories about Basil Torrens. He was of the right sort. His mother had been a V——, and his grandfather had been a J——. The words hummed in Cecil's ears. She had the address of Father Patrick Emory, St. Joseph's Church, Silver Lode, Nevada, safely hidden, and she looked at her mother with thoughtful blue eyes.

"I think every family has a history, if one cares to bother," she said. "And a pedigree, too."

"Oh, but the Torrens—"

"Take Father. There was a big family, and yet Father knows nothing about any of them."

"Thank God!" breathed Mrs. Emory, fervently.

"Well," defended Cecil, "supposing one of his brothers were a priest—what then?"

"I wouldn't care if he were an archbishop—"

"Oh, Mother! You don't mean that! Just think! Wouldn't you be glad if we had a priest of our own? Supposing now that I could discover a real

priest—a real, actual, live priest, who was an Emory! Wouldn't that make you happy...and proud?"

Mrs. Emory set down her tea-cup with a clatter.

"Cecil," she said, "it would not. Will you remember that you are no longer in the convent? If your father's brother officiated in the nearest church, I wouldn't go out of my way to see him! Religion...if I don't get enough of religion! Sometimes I think I shall be glad when you are married. You are a walking conscience."

"But—a *priest*, Mother—"

"Cecil!"

"Well," she said, defiantly, "Father would be glad, I'm sure."

"If you knew how you annoy your father when you start on any religious topic, you'd be more careful."

"He ought to be annoyed!" burst out Cecil. "Why, he *never* goes to church!"

Mrs. Emory held her head.

"Cecil, if you go on like this after you are married, don't come and complain to me if Malcolm Travers *beats* you! Sometimes I want to—well, never mind. If you discover any priests or bishops in the Emory family, you may have them all to yourself. Don't share the pleasure with us. We don't want it."

Cecil's eyes flashed curiously.

"Very well, Mother. I shall remember."

"Let us talk of pleasanter things," went on Mrs. Emory. "You will be glad to hear that Muriel and Colin are engaged. They settled it at once—after your announcement there were no objections possible. Perhaps we can have a double wedding. Colin is getting a ring for her the exact duplicate of yours. You two brides-elect will have to talk over a suitable date at once."

Cecil's lips twitched.

"Yes, Mother?"

"I am very happy, Cecil—oh, I am so happy! You children are making me happy. Did you and Malcolm talk of a date the other day, when he gave you your ring?"

"Why...no," said Cecil, "we didn't."

"Then I think the four of you should settle that at once! I'll tell Colin so." She stooped and kissed the golden head. "My little daughter, I have you to thank for this. Without your cooperation Colin never would have succeeded, but now—" Her voice trembled, and she left the room quickly, as if anxious to hide her emotion. And Cecilia, with all the peace of the last hour drained away from her, stood up, too, and went with slow steps to her own room. She closed the door, and locked it, standing at the window then, looking at the green trees of the Park, and below, the winding paths where people moved about their everyday affairs. And taking inventory, as it were, of her own character, she knew that she would



marry Malcolm Travers unless she escaped from her mother's influence. Her mother dominated her—had always done so. When she revolted against that imperious will, her affections intervened and she would do anything in the world to please her, to bring a smile to her face. Two days of coldness completely subjugated the girl, and even as she planned her flight from the lot that her mother had ordained she knew it would cause her suffering.

Yet it must be endured . . .

That evening Malcolm Travers dined with them. "Muriel asked me what date you had decided on, Cecil," said Colin. "I think she is rather keen for a double wedding." They were looking at the engagement ring which Colin had taken out of his pocket to show to his father. Considering that Thomas Emory was paying for it, his son felt that he ought to be allowed to admire it. "What about it, Malcolm?"

"What about it, Cecil?" said Malcolm Travers with a smile.

"Why, I don't know," said the girl, vaguely. "Must we set a date? Why not let Colin and Muriel get married first?"

Mrs. Emory made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, come now!" said Thomas Emory.

"Please, Cecil," began Colin.

"Cecil is going to do this all by herself," said Malcolm Travers, with an air of authority, and taking



her hand in his. "Some time next month? A June wedding?"

"June tenth is your father's birthday," said Mrs. Emory. "Why not that date? That will give you five weeks of preparation—"

"June tenth—shall it be on June tenth, Cecil? Today is the second of May—will you make it the tenth?"

Cecil looked at her father.

"Would that please you, Father?" she asked.

"Why, of course it would, my dear," said her father. "But don't consult me—suit yourselves first."

"All right, then. The tenth—June tenth," said Mrs. Emory. She breathed a sigh of relief, and Cecilia realized quite well that this date was not new to her mother. She had probably decided on it some time before. So! They had settled the date!

Cecilia was silent as usual after that. Her father and Malcolm Travers kept up an active chat. Colin departed Muriel-ward and Mrs. Emory played the attentive mother to perfection. Malcolm Travers excused himself early. Her point won, the mother could now venture to be more critical.

"You will have to exert yourself a little more if you intend to keep Malcolm Travers interested," she said. "A dull wife is a poor companion."

Cecil had endured enough for one evening.

"Is it necessary to exert one's self for what one does not intend to keep?" she asked. "Or does Mal-

colm Travers think he is marrying a professional entertainer?"

"Cecil!" Mrs. Emory looked the shock these words gave her. "Do not be commonplace. And you will discover that a husband is occasionally glad of a little conversation."

Cecil left the room hotly rebellious.

When she had cooled off she began her letter to Father Emory—and in a queer spirit—with the desire of forgetfulness, a wish to put thoughts of the present away from her. What did it matter? An old weather-beaten, busy man, who never had a moment to spare from his many duties—he would never take time to answer it. . .

When Cecil Emory was ten years older she read that letter with an amused smile for the little girl who had written it. For it was a little girl's letter, oddly interspersed with some of the quaint wisdom learned from Mother Philippa, yet which indicated what the little girl would be when grown to womanhood.

She told him about herself and her people, and of meeting Basil Torrens, who had mentioned his name and given the priest's address at her earnest solicitation.

"Long years ago," she wrote, "at least it seems long years ago to me now, my father used to tell us odd stories of his birthplace among the Connemara mountains, and describe the trees and the thick growing

ferns where the fairies hid away, the royal fern and the maiden-hair, the chestnut trees and the beeches, the elms, the sycamores, and Our Lady's ash tree which grew at the head of the Glen. He would tell us about the moonlight nights among the 'Killeries' and how lovely it was to see—and none could see it out of Ireland—the long slivers of silver painted on the mountain-sides and the moon face winking and smiling over her work, with every lake a looking-glass. And is it true that there were giants in the olden days and that they used the big rocks on the top of the hills for play toys? And he told us how my grandmother used to make woollen stockings for all her boys—she had but the one girl!—spinning her wheel during the long winter nights by the turf fire. And he said—once—that he'd give a little money if I could sit by that fire, too, and learn some of the lilt that my grandmother sang. . . .”

But as Cecil wrote she was back with her father in a very far distant past indeed. A wee girl of six or seven, then, “the flat in Sixty-fifth street” was paradise, and her father used to sit in his shirt-sleeves of an evening and smoke his pipe and tell his tales of “home”—terrifying tales, and blood-curdling, some of them, that sent her shivering to bed. He had a fund of the folk-lore of his country at the tip of his tongue and “the child with his mother's eyes” brought it back to his mind, and he rehearsed it all. She had never forgotten.

“And if you are indeed related to me—and oh, I hope you are!—will you tell me the name of the song my grandmother used to sing of nights?”

And in a postscript:

“When I was speaking to Mr. Torrens, he said I was the only one he had ever met with eyes like yours. And my father used to call me, then, ‘the child with my mother’s eyes.’

“And maybe my wish will come true,” she ended, “if I sign myself, as I hope I am,

“Your affectionate niece,

“Cecilia Mary Emory.”



## CHAPTER X

### INTRODUCING FATHER PAT

WHEN the big man loosened the rope that held his lanky gray mare to the sapling, he stood with it between his fingers, a thoughtful expression on his face. Then, shoving the soft black hat farther down over his eyes, he mounted, settling himself in the saddle. Old Erin turned her nose to the trail—she was a little anxious to get home—but her rider held her in, slouching forward, the reins gathered loosely, a queer expression in his eyes, had one been able to see them. The mare threw up her head, and whinnied loudly, asking, in her own fashion, the cause of the delay.

“It’s the other road for us tonight, Erin, my colleen,” he said, “and don’t be fooling about it, either, but turn about and go.” He pulled the rein as he spoke and the animal turned under his guidance—and obediently followed his lead up the straight path that lead over the hills. Here, after about ten minutes smart riding, they came to a gully. Erin stiffened her forefeet determinedly, but a sharp word sent her over, bracing and sliding until they reached the bottom, then up again, crawling, inch by inch, until they got to the opposite slope. There was better ground here, the bunched grass giving her a foot-

hold, and Old Erin's speed increased. Presently they turned into a steep-sided ravine with a strong river rushing and roaring at the bottom. The walls were sometimes sheer cliffs of rocks, and again there were long slides of gravelly ground. An obscure trail indeed, and hard going—a trail worn by the action of the river and the weather. On a wider strip of it the big man halted Old Erin, and glanced quickly at the sky. It was still a light blue up there between the mountains, but down here it had grown dark, and when he pulled a little black book out of his pocket he found that he could not see to read. So he dismounted and sat close to the rock, with Old Erin standing with her nozzle on his shoulder, a little uneasy, he could tell, for she was a "knowledgeable beast." She seldom came this way with him, and never at nightfall. He rubbed her nose comfortingly and held it close to his neck, speaking to her in a soothing voice. Her head dropped. If he were satisfied, she would be.

Night came quickly — suddenly — perhaps the watcher had dozed a little, for when he glanced up again the patch of blue was gone and down upon him shone a thousand stars. The moon was already rising, but it would be an hour before it pierced the gloom of the dark ravine. He struck a match and looked at his watch. When he saw the time he got up stiffly and drew Old Erin's rein closely around his arm. There was barely room for the

two of them on the narrow path, but he did not want to put his weight on her; the going was too hard. The mare went slowly, turning her head every once in a while to be quite sure that her master understood what he was doing. They had picked their way like this for about ten minutes when a sound on the path ahead of them sent Old Erin's ears erect. She stood still, but he urged her on until she reached a sort of flat space which had seemingly been scooped out of the solid rock to form a safe spot for camping. As they stepped out Old Erin, still with ears alert, moved closer to the sheer granite wall. Gently patting her now, her master faced two men, one slightly in advance of the other. The moonlight struck the polished steel of the rifle that was held in the hands of the second rider, while the first dropped lightly to the ground from his horse.

"Up with your hands!" growled the holder of the rifle in a surly tone.

The other man now came forward—a menacing figure on that long trail, but not a word spoke the owner of gray Old Erin—just stood and looked at them.

"Up, up!" growled the surly voice again.

"It's a funny trick to be playing on an old man like me," was the remark. "Much good 'twill do either of ye to stick me up. Get down off that horse, Loco Dan, till I give the both of ye my blessing."



"Father Pat!"

The rifle wavered. The man approaching him fell back, then turned as if to mount his horse and fly. But Father Pat waved his hand.

"Come back here, Jack—and you, too, Dan. I've something to say to the both of ye. Yes, you, Dan . . . I mean you. Get off that horse this minute and come here where I can look at you. You're not mine, Dan, but my blessing won't hurt, so you'll have to take it before you go. Down on your two knees, both of ye!"

They knelt, gingerly enough, and Father Pat made the sign of the Cross over them. Loco Dan sprang up then, vaulted into the saddle and set out at a smart pace along the trail, anxious, indeed, as Father Pat well knew, to put as much space between the priest and himself as possible. The first man moved more slowly, but when he grasped the pommel of the saddle Father Pat's grave voice arrested him.

"Jack," he said. "Jack Bidwell! Listen to me!"

The man paused irresolutely.

"You're in mighty bad company, Jack," said Father Pat. "Loco Dan'll never stop at anything, and he and Rufe Thomson aren't long for Silver Lode if they keep on. There's a crowd of indignant citizens making ready to ride 'em on a rail



in the near future, and you might make a third party, Jack—you might make a third."

"Well—" The man shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not a bit well," said Father Pat, gravely. "You're one of mine and you've gone about as far as you're going to. I got wind that Rufe and Loco were planning this little bit of pirating along the Lode trail, so I thought I'd be on hand to watch how you did it. Marvin's messenger went out by Deer Creek road—it'll take him an hour longer, but he'll get to Barnabas ranch with the money-belt safe. What do you mean by it all, Jack? You're going from bad to worse—so now we'll have an end of it. Kneel here in the path beside me, make a clean breast of all you've ever done, and start straight tomorrow."

"Are you . . . do you want me to go to confession?"

"And what else? Sure you'd tell the story of a roving life to amuse a roomful of cronies over there at Startin's, wouldn't ye? Now you'll tell it here, without the trimmings, to a God Who will forgive you and help you to do right."

"But it's twenty years—"

"Then I'm sure that's long enough."

"But I can't remember—"

"I'll help—that's what I'm here for—to help. Come now, man! You're not afraid of God, are you? And you wouldn't want to pass on in the way you are now?"

"No, I wouldn't, Father Pat."

"All right, then. It's a glorious confessional we have here. God's made it for us—just for us. His stars peeping down at us and all the great saints that fought the good fight—harder ever than yours, Jack—rejoicing. Come on, lad. We'll begin back there . . . after the first communion day."

Three hours later Old Erin wearily poked her head over the half-door of her rude stable, and waited while Father Pat unlatched it. And Father Pat, though wearier still, gave her a rubbing down and fed and watered her before he went in to prepare his own meager supper. The little shack, adjoining the stable, was typically a miner's cabin. It consisted of two rooms, with rough, unplastered beams, and a floor of hard mud. There was a blackened fireplace, and a rough pine shelf which held various articles of food. In the center of the room stood a pine table, unpainted, and two chairs. On the table was a kerosene lamp which Father Pat lighted. There was no adornment, not even comfort. The window was an opening in the logs with a piece of blanket drawn across it. But on the wall above the window was a crucifix and beneath it a white card affixed to the bark with a tack. It bore two words: *The Master*. And this crucifix and those two words explained Father Pat's work and his life. He glanced up at the white figure, an aspiration on his lips, before he bent to kindle the

fire on the hearth, shoving over the coffee-pot. Then he took some hard bread from a tin on the shelf and opened a can of beans. This was Father Pat's luxurious supper, and he had not touched food since he had shared the midday meal of a miner—coffee, flapjacks and bacon. It lacked but a half-hour of midnight. He pulled out his watch to make sure, then prodded the twigs and shoved them in closer under the pot. Then an unfamiliar object on the table caught his attention. It was a letter, and on another piece of paper, roughly scrawled, were the words: "Came through Silver Lode this morning and brought this letter from post to you. Bill Ganz."

"A letter for me!" ejaculated Father Pat. "A letter for me! Now, who—"

He picked up the square envelope with its girlish writing: "Father Patrick Emory," he read, "St. Joseph's Church, Silver Lode, Nevada."

Cecil's letter had arrived.

The coffee boiled in the pot, the beans lay undisturbed upon the plate, and the missionary, who had given the best years of his life to God in strange places was kneeling on the ground and sobbing as only a great-hearted man can sob, his white head buried on his arms.

And then . . . little trickles of speech from a full heart . . . words that overflowed . . .

"So Tom's alive! Tom's *alive*. Thanks be to God!



"Cecilia Mary! My mother's name! The child with my mother's eyes!

"Ah!...the turf fire...and the wool in her hands...and the hum and the whir of the wheel...and the music on her lips! Oh, Tommy, Tommy, what happened ye at all that you never thought of the old folks once you got away from them...

"And we prayed for your soul! Think of it! We prayed for your soul...

"Cecilia Mary! It's the ways of God are wonderful, asthore! And Tommy's alive! Who'd ever thought to find Tommy alive. Sure even poor Malachy Finn—God rest him!—wrote home that he'd met his death in the yards...

"Is it write to ye? Indeed I will, Cecilia Mary! And the song my mother sang—it's well I know it and I hope God grants me the joy of hearing it one day from your own lips, asthore" . . .

"An' sure, Father Pat," said Michael O'Brien, the following noontime, "has some one made ye the present of a million dollars—or a horse or a sputty-wagon? Or is it a new church, mayhap? For you look as if 'twas any of them or all of them wrapped into one...An' what's the song you're singing? It sounds mighty familiar to me."

"It should be," said Father Pat, smiling at his faithful helper and nearest neighbor, who lived a half-mile farther on "at the bend of the trail,"



with his good wife Nora. "It should be, Michael O'Brien."

And he sang in a rich tenor voice:

"Let Erin remember the days of old  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her.  
When Malachy wore the collar of gold  
Which he won from the proud invader."

And old Michael caught up the air:

"When her king, with standards of green unfurled,  
Led the Red Branch Knights to danger,  
Ere the emerald gem of the western world  
Was set in the crown of a stranger."

The two exiles looked at each other when they had finished—then, instinctively, their hands went out and clasped.

"God be with the good old days," said Father Pat.

"An' bring dead and living to the sight of heaven. Amen," said Michael O'Brien.

Silence a few moments then, for both of them were back in the past.

"It's a niece of mine," explained Father Pat, and was there not a bit of pride in his voice? "She's written to me. It was Torrens. You remember Torrens?"

"Oh, ay! A likely lad was Torrens."

“Well, then, he met the child and got talking to her—she must be about fourteen or so—judging from her letter. ‘Long whiles since,’ says she, talking of her daddy’s tales of the old country. And a week is ‘long whiles’ to the young. I’ll be writing to her today, God bless her! Sure she’s given me the greatest happiness I’ve had since Dunny’s dance hall burned down. There’s not a bit of a mistake about it, Michael O’Brien. I was the oldest of the family, and the only O’Flaherty of them all! The rest were Emorys. But I took after my mother’s family in build, and I was the one with the color of her eyes. I used to be rare proud of that in those days. ‘I’m the O’Flaherty!’ I’d say when I wanted to get them going, and many’s the sound scolding I got for it, God rest my poor mother and father! And now the child is writing to me and bringing it all back...and yet behind it all it seems to me as if I’m sensing something not altogether right with her. No word does she write about Tom or her mother, and whether they’re poor or comfortable, nor of what he might be doing. Of course I can’t ask too much—”

“Not when she wasn’t sure who she was writing to,” appended Michael O’Brien. “Would you—would you mind reading the letter to me, Father Pat? I’d be mortal glad to hear it, an’ as you know, I haven’t the English.”

“Ay!” said Father Pat, laconically. He pulled

the square envelope from his pocket and opened it, his fingers shaking a little. Father Pat would not see his sixty-fifth birthday again, and this letter had stirred him to the very depths of his warm Irish heart. He read it through, slowly, carefully.

"It's a grandsome letter," said Michael O'Brien. "It'll be something to tell herself when I go back to the house."

"And if she wants to hear it, tell her to come on down," said Father Pat magnanimously. "Tell her I'll read it to her—for I know 'twill be like a breath of home to her."

"Let Erin remember the days of old  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her.  
When Malachy wore the collar of gold  
Which he won from the proud invader."

The martial strain set his pulses beating. He passed his hand over his eyes several times to wipe away the film that gathered. Memory was keen... and sure he could see his mother's face...her smiling face and the deep blue of her eyes...God bless old Tommy! Whatever his fortune, good or bad, he had evidently brought up a dear little girl with a warm heart. And he had not forgotten the old days, either, else how could the little child have them all so pat, at the ends of her fingers? He whistled under his breath as he took pen and ink from the narrow



shelf and began his reply to his little niece, Cecilia Mary.

He wrote rapidly, for words come quickly when the subject is dear to one's heart. Page after page he filled, nor did he think of the passing of the time until, at last, it was ended, and he sat reading it over. It was for "Tommy" as well as for Cecilia Mary, that letter, and much of its history was written because he felt that his brother's eyes would rest on it—the last one but himself left of their big family. Did he know their only sister, Mary, was dead—had died in Dublin in the convent there? He looked for a place to insert this bit forgotten, but the sound of hoofs on the trail made him start up from the table and go to the door. Outside stood a man with a bridle looped over his arm.

"Father Pat! You're wanted bad. Jack Bidwell's been hurt and they sent me after you."

"Jack Bidwell! Good gracious man, how—"

"Yes, Father. He and Rufe and Loco Dan got into some kind of an argument, and Loco Dan shot him. He'd ought to have more sense than hitch up with that crazy steer, anyhow."

"Well..." Father Pat made a hopeless gesture with his hands.

"Loco's never right, even when he's sober," went on the man, "but in drink—I think the devil's got that fellow branded, Father Pat."

"Don't say that, Ned. We're all branded with



the Cross—and it's the devil's business to burn that off us if he can. Even Loco Dan has the Lord's brand on him somewhere."

"Maybe, Father Pat, but he's strayed mighty far from the corral. At any rate Jack's wanting you. He'll last till morning, Doc says, and he can't be satisfied till he sees you. It's something he wants to give or tell you—"

"I'll go now. Where is he—at Startin's?"

"Yes, Father."

"You're going back to Startin's?"

"No, Father, I'm going on to the station. I'll leave old Darby here in O'Brien's stall and catch the coach at the turn."

"Good boy! I have a letter you can mail for me. Will you take good care of it, Ned? It's a precious letter to my own little niece in New York, and she'll be sore disappointed if she doesn't get it. You'll be careful?"

"I will, Father, I sure will."

"Fine!" He brought out the letter. "Put the stamp on it—I have ne'er a one in the house—and here's a bit of change—"

"Father Pat!" The man looked embarrassed.

"Well, all right. No harm meant. You'll put the stamp on it, then—that's a lovely name she has, don't you think so, Ned? Cecilia Mary! 'Twas my mother's." He whistled and Old Erin poked her nose over the top of the stall, then pushed through,

coming to him. "She has blue eyes, too, like sapphires, just ready to turn black, or cornflowers—that was the color of my mother's eyes." He had lifted the saddle from the door as he spoke. It was on Old Erin by this time, and now, clapping his weather-beaten black felt hat on his head, he mounted quickly.

"I'm off, Ned. Don't forget my little girl's letter."

"I won't, Father," said Ned, earnestly. "An' I'll put the biggest stamp on it that I can find in the post office."

Father Pat smiled at that, but the eyes under the rusty hat brim were anxious. It took him three-quarters of an hour to get to Silver Lode, a rambling one-street town, with a few straggling houses and Startin's. Startin's was the principal store, hall and hotel, and though the proprietor did his best to preserve law and order, there had been many violations of both. Startin's dance hall had risen on the ashes of a similar building that had preceded it, owned by a man named Dunny, and when Jim Startin laid the first beam, Father Pat called on him.

"Business is business, Jim," he said. "Sometimes it's the devil's business, and Dunny's was that. I'm not asking you to run any prayer-meeting or tea parlor, but I am asking you to play fair with the boys. Give 'em a square deal for their money."

"Father Pat," said Jim Startin, "I'm in this for

honest coin, and I promise you I'll be decent and straight. I can't help it if a bad gent gets loose on these premises, but I promise to hog-tie him as soon as he hollers."

"That suits me," said Father Pat. "Shake!" And they shook hands. The compact had been kept. Startin's was a "decent place," and the boys who rode in from the neighboring ranches soon found it out. A few of them had to be "hog-tied," but one or two lessons proved sufficient. Jim Startin lounged up to Father Pat's side now as he swung down from Old Erin's back.

"Sorry, Father Pat," he said, "but I wasn't around or Loco Dan wouldn't have got away."

"So he did get away?"

"Yes. There's a couple of boys out after him. They'll bring him in. Jack's a bit easier, though. Doc says—" He made a motion with his hand and Father Pat nodded.

"All right, Jim. I'll go to him."

He spoke to the men who were clustered about the door, and they made room for him, for all respected Father Pat and some of them loved him. Jack Bidwell was lying in Jim Startin's bed. His eyes were closed—but they flared open as the priest touched his hand.

"I knew I was all right," he muttered.

"Yes, thank God," said Father Pat. "You've



made your peace—and you've made it in time, Jack."

"Well, Loco thought I told you about it—that I tipped you off so that you could steer Marvin's man. Especially when I stayed on—you know what for. I wasn't taking anything from him, either—he's been no sort of a pal, but he'd given me a hard-luck story and I fell for it. And now, lying here, I don't think I care much—maybe I'm glad. I don't think I'd ever be able to walk the straight and narrow."

"Yes, Jack, you would. God helps."

"Maybe, then, this is how He has helped me," was the reply, with a twisted smile. "At any rate, I'm going out. And there's my little boy back east. He's at school—his name's John Bidwell, the same as mine. There's nothing but straight money in the bank for him. I never spent a cent on him that I got crooked. There's enough in that bankbook to cover him for the next seven years—by that time he'll have got his start. He's ten now. Would you get in touch with him, Father Pat?"

"My dear boy, I surely will." A revelation of this sort was nothing new to the priest. In his twenty years among the western hills he had heard tales which no romance-maker could excel. "And has the boy a mother, Jack?"

"No, Father Pat. She died when he was born. She was my second wife. The first . . . I was divorced



from her. She wasn't a Catholic and there was always trouble between us. A girl we had...she's a young lady now, if she's alive, but I never heard from her and never wanted to. That was a hell, that life. My name ain't Bidwell, either. That belonged to an old pal that got shot up in Dale City. You'll find papers in my box—they'll tell you all you will have to know. You'll...do what you can for the boy, Father Pat?"

"Is he in a Catholic school?"

"No, Father, but in that paper—Jim Startin helped me make it out—you're guardian; and Jim put his seal to it, too, so it's legal. And you can do whatever you like, so long as you just see that he goes straight where I went crooked."

"I'll do that," said Father Pat, earnestly. "Now put all these things out of your mind, Jack. God's waiting for you somewhere along the trail and when you catch up with Him you want to be able to talk to Him right. I'm here to get you ready—God's priest in God's place. Trust your boy to God and me, and God will do it all. Come now. As soon as we have had another little chat together, we'll prepare you for the journey. And if there's time, and you live so long, I'll bring Him to you tomorrow morning."

But he knew Jack would not last. His strength was ebbing even then and after the anointing, Father Pat stayed close while the soul of the wanderer went

on over the Border. Nor did he leave until the hands grew cold in his clasp, nor until he had reverently closed the lids and crossed those hands upon the quiet breast.

"Gentlemen," said he to the men outside, "Jack's gone on. He's safe and has made his peace with God. I'd advise ye all to look into things just about now. Life's mighty uncertain among these hills, and there's a few of you need a general house-cleaning. When you're ready, I am."

They shuffled uneasily. No one spoke as he mounted Old Erin and rode away.

## CHAPTER XI

### CECILIA DECIDES

**B**ASIL TORRENS was now a steady visitor at the Emory home, and as the date for the wedding drew nearer—and it was indeed to be a double one—Mrs. Emory relaxed her watchful attention to Cecilia's every action. She did not think it necessary to speak the word of caution she would surely have uttered had the marriage not been close at hand. Neither did she try to discover how matters stood between the girl and the young man who was to lead her to the altar. She had not the faintest idea that Cecilia carefully avoided Malcolm Travers, that she was never alone with him, and that whatever courtship was being conducted was going on under the eyes of all who cared to look. As for Malcolm Travers, he was a little grateful that his bride-to-be exacted nothing, amused at what he considered her convent outlook on life, and supremely confident that she would do exactly as he chose when she bore his name. Had she not always been an easily controlled daughter? Besides that, being a young fellow who had never, until recently, gone in for serious things, he found Tom Emory and Paul Chamberlin's enterprise fascinating, and had astonished the older men by the facility

with which he grasped details. "The fellow really has a top-piece," Tom Emory told his wife. Basil Torrens, moreover, was a visitor accepted and welcomed by all the members of that magic circle which had opened to include Mrs. Emory's own self. She was happy, and since happiness bestows content and creates beauty, Mrs. Emory was a contented woman who seemed to blossom into new attractiveness with every passing hour.

From Renie Ward in the Vermont hills came a long and enthusiastic letter to the dearest "pal" of her college career. She invited her to remain with her as long as she pleased, and pictured the attractiveness of the simple life as lived by her father and herself. It was for the sake of the father's health that they had taken up this as their place of residence, and now, almost fully restored, he continued his work as an artist. Renie described their hunt for places of interest and the nights spent outdoors about a camp fire.

"And Father knows you so well, Cecil, and he has already planned a canvas that will include you. He begs of you to hasten and make him famous."

In the same strain the girl wrote Mother Philippa, whom Cecilia went to see shortly afterward. The nun anxiously urged her to settle things with her family and seize on Renie's invitation, then, as an excuse for flight until the storm blew over. But though Cecil agreed with her in her own pleasant



manner, Mother Philippa realized that her heart was not in the plan. So she forced her to promise that the matter should be disposed of during the week that followed. And Cecil gave the promise and meant to keep it.

But her thoughts were depressing. Even her escape seemed laid along conventional lines. With lagging steps and drooping spirits she came back that morning to her home, after giving that promise to Mother Philippa. Basil Torrens had called with some specifications he had promised to leave for Mr. Emory, and Mrs. Emory was entertaining him. She glanced up as Cecilia stood in the frame of the door.

"I am really extraordinarily busy," she said, rising. "Our great event is less than three weeks away, and I cannot feel satisfied unless I attend to every little detail myself. Cecil must not be bothered."

Basil Torrens smiled vaguely. Cecil, at the door, turned back. There were some letters lying on the hall table. She took them, and recognizing the post-mark on the top one thrust it hurriedly into her sleeve. She was looking over the others when her mother called to her.

"Oh, is the mail there? Any letters for me?"

"All these are for you, Mother," announced Cecil, holding them out to her, and taking them, the mother went on into the library, drawing the doors shut behind her. Basil Torrens, standing waiting for

Cecil, noticed the brightness of her eyes, the flush of her cheeks, and as she put one finger across her lips a curious sensation swept over him. *Was he falling in love with Cecil Emory?* The thought struck him so quickly that he caught his breath. It was followed by another—anger at himself, and contempt. Falling in love with Cecil Emory? Never, never!

“Oh, Mr. Torrens! Listen! I’ve a letter from Father Pat! There is a postmark...Silver Lode...and his name on the cover. Oh, Mr. Torrens, isn’t it *splendid!*” She drew it out and showed it to him. “And it’s so nice and *fat!* And look! He put a fifty-cent stamp on it! Imagine! I wonder why he did that?”

Basil Torrens knew nothing, of course, of Ned’s promise and how he had redeemed it, but he smiled at her.

“I suppose he wanted to be quite sure you’d get it.”

“Oh, I hope it’s true, I hope it’s true!” she said, breaking the seal. “Why it is true! Look! ‘My dear little niece, Cecilia Mary!’ Oh, glory, glory, glory, it is true!” She was trembling with excitement.

“Look here, Lady, you’ll have to be careful,” said Basil Torrens. “You’ve done this without letting your father know about it, and he may not like it.”

A shadow crossed her face.

"It's not my father—it's my mother," she said. "I think—my father would be glad—" She leaned against the piano, then, thrusting the letter into her sleeve once more, she sat down and began to play.

"She has the true Celtic temperament," said Basil Torrens to himself. "She's all heart and fire."

"Let Erin remember the days of old  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her.  
When Malachy wore the collar of gold  
Which he won from the proud invader.

"When her king, with standards of green unfurled,  
Led the Red Branch Knights to danger.  
Ere the emerald gem of the—"

Her voice, thrilling with intense feeling, was suddenly interrupted. The door of the library was thrown open, and Mrs. Emory, her hands full of papers, appeared there. Evidently she did not expect to see Basil Torrens and she made a brave effort to conquer the anger that had made her pale and brought lightning to her dark eyes.

"Cecil!" she said, and her voice rasped.

Silence fell. Somehow Basil Torrens felt there was something more in this than the simple singing of a song.

"Pardon me, Mr. Torrens," said Mrs. Emory, in an icy tone. "Cecil, you are well aware of the fact that I detest that!"



The girl had risen from the bench.

"I had forgotten," she said, in a low tone. Mrs. Emory looked at her an instant, opened her lips to speak, thought better of it, and the door closed behind her.

What had happened? Basil Torrens could not tell. He had no way of knowing, but all the life and sweetness left that fair face. She walked to the fireplace and stood leaning against the mantel shelf. He felt that she had forgotten him, and when he followed her she raised her eyes to his, putting her hand into the hand he had extended. And once more, at the touch of her fingers, he was aware that Cecilia Emory and he were no longer friends.

"Cecil," he said, "Cecil—I—"

She stared at him, startled. Then, from brow to chin she flushed scarlet, turning from him, covering her face with her hands. He stood close to her, trembling.

"Cecil...little Cecil...Oh, good-by, good-by!"

He turned then, realizing as if pierced by a lightning flash that he must never see her again. His parting with Joyce Moore three years before had been a philosophical affair—and oh, the contempt of self that now swept through him! Twice he had fallen in love with a girl who preferred Malcolm Travers—and this last girl was to be Malcolm Travers' wife in three short weeks! He was in a rage as he left the Emory house—and so strong was



this sensation that it made him feel ill. Twice! Twice!

With his going Cecil sank into a chair and tried to regain her composure. She, too, had been attracted by Basil Torrens—she who had cared so little about Malcolm Travers—whose coming and going mattered nothing. And she was to marry Malcolm Travers, to be his wife, forever and ever? Oh, no, she could not. It had been but a mild protest before compared to this—a feeling of insecurity, of indecision, a sort of lurking idea that maybe she ought to go through with it...when it was done it could not be undone...everything would be settled...no more mental worry. But now...had that look on Basil Torrens' face roused this hatred?

She stirred uneasily. Her mother's voice sounded in the library. She sprang to her feet and ran up the stairs to her own room, turning the key in the lock. Then she drew Father Pat's letter from her sleeve. Such a dear letter, telling her they had thought Tom Emory dead—report had reached them that he had been killed—of his life in the Nevada hills with his few scattered Catholics, rough men but with hearts like nuggets of gold. He told her of the death of the dear old blue-eyed woman in Connemara many years before, and of how her letter had touched him. And indeed he could tell her that the song was "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old," that his mother sang with all her heart in it

—and had her father told her that she could whistle like any bird God ever made? And, please God, he'd hear that song some day sung by his little niece, Cecilia Mary. And now she must show this letter to his brother, and tell him that Pat sent him all the love of his heart and hoped soon to be hearing from him.

Cecil was crying when she finished. Some of the emotion this priest had felt as he penned these words crept through and found an echo in her young soul. Oh, here was reality, here was truth, here was a man who lived close to God and to heaven; *here was what she wanted!* Her mother could enjoy the life of the world, but Cecilia Emory did not intend to. "I am meant only for the nooks and the crannies, dear Lord," she said, "so please find me one and let me creep into it."

She took up another letter lying at her elbow—Renie Ward's. It, too, held the warm friendliness of one who was good and true and unpretentious. She would go to Renie's until the storm blew over; she had promised Mother Philippa to settle it within the week—and she would. Quietly she would steal away, leaving them a note saying where she had gone—and telling them why.

She wrote the note, then, while the feeling was warm within her. It was a calm statement of facts. She had tried her very best to become reconciled to the idea of marriage with Malcolm Travers. She

could not. She knew what it would mean if she told them so, and she would not go through it again. Once had been enough. So she had written to Renie Ward, up in Vermont—this was her address—and she would go there and stay until they told her to come home. And if they followed her and tried to make her go on with this marriage she'd come back and go on with it—and at the very altar rail she would say *NO!* And surely that would be worse than upsetting things now, particularly when she was just as determined at this minute never to marry Malcolm Travers as she had always been and always would be.

She underscored the words heavily and then hid the letter under the blotter on her desk. The next thing was to see to her finances. She had nearly six hundred dollars in bills and coins—gifts from her father that she had never spent, and her allowances. And in her bank book there was the sum of two thousand on deposit! Surely that would see her through. And she would draw it *all!* She glanced at the clock—it was just half-past one—and to reach the bank would take the brisk walk of a few minutes. She would go, then, get her money and go down to the Pennsylvania station, find out when she could make connections, and when the trains left.

No one saw her leave the house. She drew out all her money with the exception of fifty dollars, then



walked over and down Broadway, through Fifty-ninth Street to the Paulist Church, where she went and knelt a few minutes before Our Lord; then out and back again to the avenue, where she hailed a car. As she got into it, and as she stood waiting for change, she saw two people sauntering side by side along the busy thoroughfare. They were Malcolm Travers and Joyce Moore.

"I have forgotten something," she told the conductor breathlessly. "Please stop." He did so, and she descended, and walked straight up toward them, confronting them.

"Miss Emory!" exclaimed the other girl. She was startled indeed. "Why—"

"Cecil!" said Malcolm Travers, under his breath. Cecil nodded.

"I saw you from the car." Her words came quickly, as if she had been running. "And I'm so glad. It seemed too good to be true. I've been trying to get you together ever since—ever since—" She hesitated. "And now you are here—"

"It was by the merest accident," began Malcolm Travers.

"Please, Miss Emory," said Joyce Moore, and her face was pale, "it was not by any appointment . . . Mr. Travers just happened—"

"That is it. I just happened, too," said Cecil, a little tremulously. "Oh, Miss Moore, you don't



know how I've *longed* to see you and talk to you. Maybe if dear Senator Hayden had been able to stay in New York I could have managed it before this. And you mustn't be vexed—"

Joyce stared at her curiously. What a little child she was! She should be filled with indignation, angry at both her promised husband and the girl who had once been his promised wife. Instead she was apologizing. What was she apologizing for?

"I'm sure you are the one who should be vexed," said Joyce Moore.

"Cecil," said Malcolm Travers, a little sharply, "you have some peculiar twist in your brain about Miss Moore and I'm going to straighten it here and now, to the satisfaction of all three. Miss Moore, you were my—you were engaged to me until three or four months ago?"

"Yes," said Joyce Moore.

"And you broke our engagement and told me you did not intend ever to marry—is not that the truth?"

"Yes," said Joyce Moore, "that is the truth. It has always been the truth."

"If Miss Emory and I were not engaged at this moment and I asked you once more—what would your answer be?"

"My answer is that I do not intend to marry—ever," said Joyce Moore, coldly.

Malcolm Travers drew a deep breath. He looked

at Joyce, and Cecilia, intercepting it, knew it for the glance of a lover... Basil Torrens had looked at her like that... and her cheeks burned... Basil Torrens... Malcolm Travers turned to Cecil with a smile.

"Are you satisfied now?" he asked.

"I am satisfied," said Cecil, sighing, "but I wish I—understood." She extended her hand. "Will you, please, Miss Moore?" And Joyce shook hands with her, feeling ages older and wiser than this child who was to marry Malcolm Travers, the fastidious, the bored. How could she keep him after marriage, this transparent, milk-and-water little maid? Cecilia smiled, and in moving back, brushed against Malcolm. He held her arm, not knowing that her hand had touched his pocket, and that something had been slipped within it by her deft fingers.

"I must be going on," she said. "Good afternoon to both of you."

"I suppose we shall meet again this evening," said Malcolm Travers lightly.

"Perhaps," nodded Cecil. She looked at Joyce Moore with an odd expression. "Do not think I am quite so foolish as I appear to be," she said. "I should like to be friends with you, Miss Moore."

"I don't see how anyone could help being friends with you, Miss Emory," said Joyce, and when Cecilia had gone she turned almost fiercely on Malcolm Travers.

"Please say good-by and go now. I feel like a traitor or something black and mean and miserable after talking to her. Oh, Malcolm Travers, you are going into this of your own will and if you are not good to her—"

"It will be easy to be good to her," he said, unsteadily. "She does not expect very much from anyone, and perhaps I'll be better to her than another man could be. Only, Joyce—you've said it—it's final—only tell me why. Why did you decide—"

"Why talk of it?" asked Joyce Moore. "There is nothing to be said."

"You have not denied yet that you love me."

"And never shall. But I am not going to marry, so go to your Cecilia Emory. It's no use."

"I shall go to my Cecilia Emory," he said, his lips white with the anger she had evoked. "And I promise you this, Joyce Moore; I shall put you out of my very thoughts. I can do it."

"I wish you to," she said. He swung away from her, then, and she went on. He did not know that her teeth had cut into her under lip, that her nails were digging into her palms. Nor did he know that when Cecilia Emory had stumbled and brushed against him his engagement ring had been slipped into his coat pocket. But from that unforeseen meeting Cecilia Emory carried one deep impression—the look



on Malcolm Travers' face when his eyes rested on Joyce Moore. It told her all, and it made her happy, convincing her that she was right. She had been caught in a curious mesh and the only way to get out was to cut the threads. This she had done. By the returning of the ring even in so furtive a manner she had lifted the burden.

She ran down the broad steps into the Pennsylvania station and proceeded at once to the Information desk. Here she got her time tables and sat down to pore over them. A train would leave that very evening around eight o'clock and another—she paused to think. Which was the best for her? And as she lifted her eyes she met another pair of eyes staring straight into hers—brown eyes, with heavy lashes. They belonged to a slender boy of about ten years of age—and there was something appealing in his glance. She moved toward him, smiling in a friendly fashion. There was a suitcase at his feet, and he sat crouched upon the hard bench, a little frightened, she thought, and very lonely.

"Well, little boy," she said, "are you waiting for someone?"

"Oh, no," he answered. "I'm all alone."

"And you're going traveling?"

"Yes. To see my father."

"And there isn't anyone to go with you?"

"I'm able to go myself. I'm ten—and I've got



all my tickets and my directions written down. Only it's—*so long!*”

Cecilia nodded.

“I know just how you feel,” she said. “I wish I could stay with you, but I’ll get you some magazines and a box of popcorn—and have you had your dinner?”

“No,” said the boy. “I was afraid I might miss my train.”

“For pity’s sake, child, how long have you been here?”

“Since eleven. Jerry brought me down from the school. Then he said it wasn’t any use bringing me back, and that the man would take care of me until the train came. But I don’t see any man—”

“But where are you going—where does your father live, boy?”

“My father is John Bidwell—that’s my name, too—and he lives at Silver Lode, Nevada.”

Cecilia blinked several times.

“Will you say part of that again?” she said. “Your father lives—where?”

“At Silver Lode, Nevada. And I have my tickets all safe in this wallet, and my train will be coming in—”

“Wait a minute,” said Cecil Emory, “wait a minute. *I’m going to Silver Lode, Nevada, myself, to visit my uncle.*”

"You are?" said the boy, his mouth falling open with surprise.

"I am," said Cecil firmly. "Let me look at your time tables...Um...3:10." She glanced at the clock, making a quick calculation. Then she went to the desk and asked a few pointed questions. She had an hour to get home, pack her bag and leave. Well...she could do it.

So it happened that Malcolm Travers, who had seen his prospective bride board a surface car early in the afternoon, might have seen that same prospective bride, accompanied by a little boy of ten years old, snugly ensconced in a coach on the Panhandle Express enroute for Chicago, a comparatively short while later.

## CHAPTER XII

### AT THE END OF THE TRAIL

AFTERWARD Cecil had time to wonder at herself. There was the hiring of the taxicab, which she bade wait for her in a side street, the hurried packing of a bag, and the donning of a smart but inconspicuous tweed suit which would serve her well for traveling. Out again, the note to her people lying on her table, and off in the taxi to the station once more, she found she had just ten minutes to spare, and she called Basil Torrens. He was at the Metropole, as she knew, and it was in keeping with the good fortune that had attended her so far that he was within immediate call.

"It is Cecil Emory," she said, "asking a very great favor from Mr. Basil Torrens."

"Mr. Torrens grants it at once—what is it, Miss Emory? All my kingdom...or a horse?"

"Neither...I am serious. No matter what happens you won't tell anyone that I have received a letter from Silver Lode—not until after—June tenth?"

"June tenth?" There was a queer note in Basil Torrens' voice. "Well...that is easy. I promise...on my word of honor! And, Miss Cecil—"

"Yes, Mr. Torrens?"

"I am leaving the city tonight. My people have sent for me and I shall probably start out again... very soon. I don't think I'll be here for the tenth. So it isn't likely I'll meet anyone to whom I can report your correspondence."

She laughed.

"That is good news."

"What?" He was hurt. "That I am going away?"

"Oh, no! But no one can ask you...well, never mind...Good-by—"

"Please...just two minutes more. When I see your Father Pat, if I do, I may mention it to him?"

Again her laughter reached him.

"Perhaps I shall be listening when you tell it."

"Not likely."

"No, of course it isn't—"

"Miss Cecil?"

"Mr. Torrens?"

"May I wish you all the joy and happiness in the world? May your every dream for a rosy future be fulfilled."

"Amen to that, Mr. Torrens—and I'm painting my own sunlight, remember. Good-by."

"Good-by," he said, and hung up the receiver, wondering a little what she meant.



"I don't know what saint takes care of girls who show the white feather," she thought, whimsically, as the train glided quietly out of the station, "but, please, dear saint, whoever you are, bring me safe to Father Pat." And then she laughed into the brown eyes of the little lad who had directed her steps in this strange way.

"Tell me," she said, putting one arm over his shoulders, "did you ever hear this song?"

"Let Erin remember the days of old,  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her—"

She hummed it under her breath, and the boy snuggled up close to her in the dusk of the car.

"I never heard it," he said, "but it's nice. I wish you were my sister."

"Why," said Cecil, solemnly, "that's easy. Give me your right hand—now say this after me: 'I, John Bidwell, promise to take you, Cecil Emory, for my sister until we reach Silver Lode, Nevada, and my father, safe and sound.'"

The boy repeated the formula, after which Cecilia, reversing the names, did the same. Then she sighed contentedly.

"See how I can make wishes come true, little brother?" she said, gaily.

"I'll be very good to you and take good care of you," asserted John Bidwell, earnestly.

"And now we're going to make the most of this journey," said Cecil. "There's lots to see, John. We're going to Chicago, and then to Denver, and to Utah before we reach Silver Lode. At least, that's what my time tables say, though I've never been there before. But do you know why I haven't the least bit of fear, John—do you know why?"

"No," he answered.

"Because it is all our country," she said. "Everywhere we go—past all these little villages and towns and great cities—these are our people—our American people, John. Years and years ago, before you and I were born, brave missionaries came over from other lands to tell them about God—are you a Catholic, John?"

"No, Cecil—"

"Well, then. These missionaries came over here and many of them traveled along the very paths where these railroads run. You'll have to read the story of the Oregon trail some day, John, and about Father De Smet, who lived scores of years among all the Indian tribes and had friends everywhere."

Tiresome, indeed, may be a journey to those beset by business cares, but to Cecilia and John the hours went by magically. All the great West was before them—and at the end was to be the boy's meeting with his father, the girl's meeting with someone already revered because of his holy office, and loved

because of the warmth which his letter had aroused in her breast. She had no idea of what the conditions might be, nor what sort of life her newly found uncle was leading. Imagination supplied certain details—a cozy cottage nestling at the foot of a tall mountain, and a small white church, with a spire, and Uncle Pat, snowy-haired and ruddy of countenance, smiling, surrounded by little children, or mounted on the gray horse of which Basil Torrens had told her, going off to visit a few scattered parishioners. She hoped his housekeeper would be a nice old lady, who would be glad to see her because she was Father Pat's niece. By-and-by, she could begin to teach Sunday-school and perhaps play the organ for Sunday and evening services.

She was quite elated over this picture, and it was not until they were on the last lap of their long journey that a certain uneasiness crept over her. How could she explain herself to Father Pat? Mother Philippa had been so careful, and she had promised, and then, like a coward, she had run away. What would this priest say to her when she stood before him and told him her story? Would he think she was a foolish child and immediately summon her relatives? And if they came—her mother could arrive before the tenth of June—she knew her mother—Cecilia felt cold as she thought about it. Well, then, and she drew a long breath, it would have to happen, and she must take the consequences.



She found that no train stopped at Silver Lode, which was about four miles back in the mountains. The nearest station was Bent River. As she stood on the tiny platform, with the train receding in the distance, the boy close beside her, then and then only did Cecilia realize what she had done. There were no other passengers to alight, and as Cecilia gazed about her, she was struck by the intense silence. The boy's eyes were fastened on her. His trust was absolute, and Cecilia did not want to shake that trust. Summoning all her courage, she approached a little shack near the end of the station and peered inside. There was an elderly man there, his head buried in a newspaper, his feet elevated on a wooden box.

"Please," said Cecil. Her voice sounded small and timid. She cleared her throat. "I beg your pardon," she said. "Will you tell me how I can get to Silver Lode?"

The newspaper came down slowly. Its reader stared at her; then he took his glasses off his nose, rubbed his eyes, and stared again. She smiled at that. It was as if he had never seen a girl before, she thought.

"Why—why—" he began, and rose to his feet. "I thought I was going loco," he said.

She did not understand, and looked at him, puzzled.

"You want to go some place, Miss?"



"Yes—Silver Lode. Is it very far? And how can I get there?"

"Silver Lode? Say, Miss, I'm—well, maybe I'm scared—it feels that way! Why, there'll be a coach along here in about ten minutes from Silver Lode, to get the mail. They'll find room in it for you, sure—they take people, but it's only a stray one goes to Silver Lode any more, though Silver Lode was once a great place before the mines petered to nothing." Talking volubly he had come out of the shack and up the platform, where little John Bidwell stood. Cecilia smiled at his friendliness and bloomed under it. Her heart rose buoyantly.

"Can you tell me—do you know my uncle, Father Patrick Emory?"

"Uncle! Father Pat! You don't mean Father Pat? You're Father Pat's niece?"

"Yes," said Cecil, happily, "I am. And I've come to visit him for a little while. It's a surprise," she added, and the old man nodded sagely. "And this boy's father is at Silver Lode, too. He came all the way with me to see him."

"I'm sure Silver Lode will be some puffed up," said the old man. He was gazing at her fascinated. In all his seventy years he had seen nothing prettier. "Good glory, Miss, you'll turn Silver Lode upside down!"

Cecil laughed.

"Oh, I suppose because of my uncle! Do you know my uncle well?"

"Father Pat's an old-timer, Miss; everybody knows him."

"And likes him?"

"Can't say that, Miss. Some of 'em might find it convenient if he weren't around. He's got a soft way for some, and a hard fist for others—but he's a man, is Father Pat. And what might the little boy's name be, did you say, Miss?"

"My name is John Bidwell—the same as my father's," spoke up the sturdy lad. "Do you know my father, too, sir?"

"John Bidwell!" The man's face sobered instantly. "Did you say John Bidwell? I never knew Jack (we called him that here) had a son."

"Oh, yes," said the boy, and it was his turn to smile happily. "We write to each other, all the time, Dad and I. And two months ago he sent the money for the tickets and things, and school stopped so early this year that Mr. Edson—he's the master—said I could get off at once. Mr. Edson had to go to England last week, so it was Jerry who brought me to the cars. But if Cecil hadn't helped me, I don't think I'd ever have reached here. I never knew it was so far away."

"Jack Bidwell!" said the man again. "Miss,

you'll keep the little lad with you until you meet Father Pat. Father Pat can tell you what to do."

"Why," said Cecilia, "I wouldn't let him go to anybody excepting the one to whom he belongs. We're brother and sister now, and, of course, I have to take care of him—don't I, John? We take care of each other!"

A long piercing whistle interrupted her.

"There's the stage coach now," said the old man. "Wait! I'll speak to Steve myself."

There was a quick exchange of talk in lowered voices between him and the weather-beaten driver, in which Cecilia caught the name of Jack Bidwell. But she paid no attention, and the boy was in the height of glory. Never in all his dreams had he thought of riding in a real stage coach, drawn by six horses, and driven by such a real Western cowboy as Steve Durano, the grizzled man on the driver's seat. They were to find out that while a stage coach was gloriously picturesque, there was something lacking in comfort.

A four-mile drive over rough roads seemingly paved with small boulders was an experience that Cecilia had never had before. At the end of it, she wished that she might never have it again. She was tired and hungry, she felt in sore need of a bath, although she had managed to wipe the dust from her face and neck before the coach rolled up to



Startin's. Jim Startin came out and stared in amazement at the boy who was helping to the ground a slim girl—and both of them strangers in Silver Lode. An odd, wrinkled little man, short and stooping, was packing groceries on his pony when Cecilia got out of the coach, and the driver hailed him.

"Hey, you, Michael O'Brien! Here's Father Pat's niece come to visit him!"

The little man stood still, scarcely able to believe his ears. Father Pat's niece! Impossible! Sure this was a young lady and Father Pat had said his niece was a child! He took off his battered hat and approached the girl, slowly.

"Please, Miss, may I ask your name?" he said respectfully.

"Cecilia Emory," she said, "and this little boy—"

"Is it Cecilia Mary, you are?" he asked, quietly. "You wrote to Father Pat a while ago?"

"Yes," said Cecilia Mary, "I did."

"Maybe, now, he misunderstood your letter? Did you say you were coming to visit him?"

"No," said Cecil. "I made up my mind later. Can you take me to him?"

"I can take you to his house, Miss, an' my Nora'll do for ye until he comes back. He's gone to one of the out-missions on a sick-call, and he can't be home before tomorrow morning."



"Then that will give me the very chance I need," said Cecil, lightly. "Is Nora—Father Pat's housekeeper?"

"Father Pat has no housekeeper," said the old man. "I'm afeared, Miss, you've got no idea—Can you sit on a horse?"

"Oh, yes," said Cecil, "I can ride."

"Then we'll borry two horses from ye, Startin," said Michael O'Brien. "Or one'll do—the roan if you have him. Miss can sit on my nag, an' the boy can ride with me on the roan."

"You can have the two and welcome, if you want them," said Jim Startin, and at the sound of his voice Cecilia turned to him. A half-dozen men had come out and stood leaning against the posts watching her. Now, when they saw her face with its shining blue eyes, one of them came forward, hat in hand.

"Maybe you'd better let the young lady take my Peggy," said he. "She's sure gentle."

He looked appealingly at Cecilia who shook her head. He turned to Michael O'Brien.

"Maybe you'll introduce me to the lady," he said.

Michael O'Brien hesitated.

"I think I'll let Father Pat do all the introducing, Lon," was his dry answer. "He'll probably take care of things when he gets back." He turned to

Cecilia, and the young man retreated, a little chagrined, while the covert grins of the others showed that they appreciated Michael's retort. "Come now, little lady," he said, "I'll help you up—it's a mile or two of a journey to Father Pat's shack, and you must be tired."

But Cecilia needed no help; she took the reins with a sensation of confidence she had not expected to feel. Startin's big roan had been brought out, and Michael loaded it with some of his provisions, then took the lad in front of him and led the way. Cecilia turned, however, with a friendly little smile to Jim Startin. It included all who were watching her, and they acknowledged it by sweeping bows, and continued to watch her until she had disappeared from view.

But they had no topic of conversation equal to this—the arrival of Father Pat's niece at Silver Lode. By the time that Cecilia's horse had gone its first half-mile, reports of her coming and of her beauty had circled the small town. In their excitement the boy had been overlooked, but when the driver informed them that the little lad was Jack Bidwell's son, Jack Bidwell, whose murderer was still at large, they had a new source of speculation. Little John Bidwell, asking for his father, and his father dead a week! Surely Silver Lode had enough to keep tongues busy!

But Michael O'Brien's mind was in a turmoil as he preceded Cecilia along the Lode trail. What in the name of conscience would Father Pat do with her? A city-bred girl, who knew nothing of hardships, living on eggs and beans and stale bread and coffee, and meat only once in a while when a rancher did some slaughtering. . . .

"I'll be taking you to Nora, first," he said. "We'll get you a bite before you come back to Father Pat's."

"If you don't mind," said Cecilia, civilly, "I'll go to Father Pat's first and get my own supper. I can . . . manage. And he mightn't like it if I went anywhere else."

"There's maybe nothing in his house to eat—"

"If there's anything for him, there's something for me," said Cecilia firmly. "I didn't come out here to make trouble for anyone. We'll do nicely, Mr. O'Brien."

"My name is Michael, Miss."

"Oh, then, Nora must be Mrs. Michael," laughed Cecilia.

She was wondering at herself. The trail was so narrow in places that only the surefootedness of the pony kept them from a bad fall—and yet she did not feel the least alarm, the least depression. Not once had the sight of so many faces embarrassed her. It was all part of a glorious adventure—and every

hour of every day, while it brought the dreaded date nearer, meant that it would soon be past. And finally when they halted before the little shack which was Father Pat's home, and when Michael O'Brien, pointing, said, "there is the house," even then she felt no fear.

"Who may the lad be?" asked Michael O'Brien, now.

"John Bidwell," said the lad himself. "My father is at Silver Lode."

"But the man at the station said I should bring him to Father Pat first, before asking for his father," explained Cecilia.

"Well . . ." Michael, bewildered turned to lift the packages from the big roan to strap them on the pony for his journey of another half-mile. "That was a good idea. Most of these men go off prospecting an' there's no telling when they'll be around — But Father Pat'll know." He swung open the half-door that led to Old Erin's roomy stall, now vacant. "Get in here, Duke," he said to the horse, "an' behave yourself till I return ye to the man that owns ye. There's some provisions I got here at Father Pat's order today—I'll leave them with you, Miss. An' of course you'll make as free with them as if he were with you." He tweaked John's ear. "We'll have to get him a wee pony of his own," he said, "an' an outfit like Lon West's.



They call him dandy Lon out here because he combs his hair." He laughed outright, then. "Keep the door barred an' don't neither of ye go out after dark, for it's pitch black an' a stranger finds it hard to know the way. It's getting dark now, but my Nora'll sure be over as soon as I've told her about you. God be with ye!"

Off he jogged. Cecilia and John looked at each other a second—then Cecilia began to laugh.

"We're out West, John," she said, "and did you ever dream it would be like this?"

"Why, of course I did, Cecil," he said, eagerly, "We used to go camping—I can make coffee and I can fry—"

"Look here, young man," said Cecil, severely, "I am the camp cook—if there's anything to cook! Oh, John, John, look at the lovely bucket of water standing outside the door. Come on, let's get a drink, and wash, quick, before it gets too dark."

She magically produced soap and towel somewhat the worse for usage, a comb, hair-brush, tooth-brush and paste. In a few seconds they were splashing away and soon both John and Cecilia were refreshed. Hunger, however, still had to be satisfied. The interior of the shack was comfortless enough, but to these two it was part of the play in which they were the actors. Beans and bread, and coffee, too, for John knew how to set the fire going, were soon

prepared. The beans were cold, the bread hard, the coffee poor, having neither milk nor sugar. But their hunger was so great that the food was relished better than the daintiest of meals. Cecilia found the lamp on the table and John produced a match and lighted it. They went into the inner room. Father Pat's bed was a couch of rough logs raised about a foot from the floor. There were no springs and only a thin cotton mattress—no pillows, no sheets. A blanket was folded neatly across the bottom of the bed. That was all. The house was clean enough, "but," as Cecilia said to herself, "there's nothing in it to get dirty." She wondered a little what the life of this priest must be in such cold poverty.

John crouched before the fire. He was nodding. She spoke to him, then helped him to his feet and put him in Father Pat's bed, covering him with the blanket. Hardly had his head touched the mattress when he was asleep. And as she came out, holding the small lamp in her hand, there was a knock at the door.

"It's Michael, Miss," said a familiar voice, and Cecil, smiling, drew the bar out of its socket. It was indeed Michael and his wife, Nora, for Nora O'Brien, a woman as small as her husband, and with a weather-beaten, lined countenance and iron-gray hair, followed him. She had been a little indignant when Michael brought her the news of Cecil's arrival, and the indignation had shown itself

in the haste with which she flew along the path in the gathering dusk. But now as she followed Michael, and Cecilia, holding the lamp, raised her flower-like face, with its shining eyes, and the golden hair clinging in waves about her forehead and ears, Mrs. Nora fell back, all her indignation taking wing.

"For all the world like a smiling angel," she said to herself. Aloud, "Glory, child! What on earth made you come away out here without a word to his reverence?"

"Oh," said Cecil. And then, "Do you think he'll be—angry?"

"Angry?" echoed Nora O'Brien, quick to sense the apprehension in her tones. "I've never seen Father Pat angry in my life, and I don't think he'll get angry now. But it's sorry he'll be that he can't make you more—comfortable. This is hardly the kind of a home a little lady like you is used to."

"But Father Pat *lives* here," said Cecilia, quietly. "And—I didn't ask to come—I just came. Besides . . . perhaps I can make it just a little bit more . . . well, that doesn't matter. I'm here, and if he doesn't put me out I'm going to stay."

"Dear child, you can't stay here alone."

"No?" said Cecil. "And why not?"

"My dear, it's not for me to tell you why not. Father Pat will find some place for you to stay—





LOOKING UP AT HIM WAS "THE CHILD WITH  
HIS MOTHER'S EYES"





there's Mrs. Miller's at Deer Creek—she has two daughters—perhaps, if you want to visit a while, he'll arrange to have you stop with them.”

Cecil looked at her with suddenly compressed lips. “An’ ’twas as if Father Pat himself was looking you in the eye,” she said to Michael afterward.

“I’m not going to the Miller house or anybody else’s house,” she said firmly. “I got away from people and I’m not going back to people. If uncle can’t make room for me here or with you and Mr. O’Brien—”

“Glory be...our house is just the same as this one,” said Nora.

“If it’s good enough for you and Mr. Michael, it’s good enough for me,” said Cecilia firmly. “And maybe you can take me? I suppose John’s father will be sending for him tomorrow. I’ve put him to sleep in Father Pat’s bed,” she said, “he was so tired.”

“Well, then,” said Nora, “Michael can tumble in beside him, an’ you’ll stay with me tonight. Father Pat can make what arrangements he likes in the morning.”

“But I must be back in the morning,” said Cecil. “I must be here when Father Pat comes home.”

So it chanced when Father Pat Emory hit the top of the trail leading him to his shack the next morning, he saw smoke curling upward from its rough chimney. This did not surprise him for the

stray traveler often used his fire. But as he came nearer there was a thin flutter of white from the lone window—a curtain contrived from a slip that Cecil Emory had put into her bag on leaving home. He had avoided Silver Lode on the way, taking the river trail because it saved him a half-hour. Now he spoke to Old Erin quickly; as if she, too, anticipated the surprise in store she broke into a smarter gait, and as Father Pat drew near the door opened “an’ sure out came a mist of sunshine that was fit to blind me,” and before him, looking up at him, was “the child with his mother’s eyes.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### FATHER PAT'S GIRL

THE priest could only stare in his utter bewilderment—and the girl stared back at him—this weather-beaten, rugged man, his wiry frame unbent beneath the years of hard work, sleepless nights, disappointments and hardships. Seamed and lined was his tanned, dark face; snowy white his hair. But there was the sweetness of a great patience about his mouth and the glint of a great kindness in the blue of his eyes. He dismounted from his mare now and advanced toward her.

"I don't know whether it's a real Irish fairy come to visit me, or whether I'm just thinking things," he said humorously. "Maybe now you could tell me which it is yourself?"

"It's Cecilia Mary, Father Pat," said Cecil, in a voice she vainly tried to make quite brave and strong.

"Cecilia Mary!" He continued to look at her. "You've grown some," he added. "To me Cecilia Mary had a long braid down her back—or is it bobbed hair they're wearing now?—and a pack of books under her arm. What do you mean by growing up like this, Cecilia Mary, since last week?"

"I'm out of college two years," said the girl quietly.



"Two years. Out of college! And how old are ye?"

"I'm twenty-two, Father Pat."

"Twenty-two! Um—that an age! You look maybe sixteen, Cecilia Mary." She glanced at him, and there was a sudden twinkle in her eye to match his own.

"I've some coffee ready," she said. "I started it as soon as I saw your horse on the trail. Mr. Michael told me you might be along that way to save time. And here is John Bidwell. He came with me. He has a father at Silver Lode, but Mr. Michael wouldn't let us go look for him—he said not until you came back—that his father had probably gone prospecting. Mrs. Nora brought over baking-powder and I've some pancake batter ready. Would you like egg pancake and bacon, Father Pat, for breakfast?"

"Sure it's a real live cook fairy," said Father Pat, in a voice he tried to render jocular. He was used to surprises, but he had had quite enough for one occasion. How in the name of conscience had Jack Bidwell's son come here? What a handsome lad! How had he learned—but he couldn't have learned of his father's death yet! And what could he say to him at all! Or had Jack Bidwell forgotten he was coming? And here was this golden-haired creature cooking a meal! For him! He hadn't had a meal cooked in his own house for twenty years!

"I'll put up Old Erin," he said, "and come back and sample your pancakes and bacon, Sun-top." He frowned, drawing down his brows. "You know I'm a bit necessary in these parts, and good cooking might do me harm. Think it will, Sun-top?"

"Oh, no!" said Cecil, a little shyly. She stood close to Old Erin and rubbed her nose. "She's not pretty to look at, but I guess she's a darling," she said.

"I reckon I guess so, too," said Father Pat, and she knew he was laughing at her. "Old Erin and I understand each other. We're just good pals."

He ate the pancakes and bacon, which were good, and drank the coffee, which was better than when he made it himself, before he said another word. "They taught you something else beside book learning in your college, Sun-top," he said with satisfaction. "Who were you with?"

"The Ursulines," she said. "And we had a domestic science class. It was lots of fun and lots of good hard work, too. Mother Philippa didn't care who you were—you weren't allowed to go in for Domestic Science until you had won two honor cards, and then you peeled potatoes and scraped vegetables. . . . But we did learn to cook, and to sew, and to knit—"

"Good gracious, good gracious!" blinked Father Pat. "Psychology, sockology — I never thought to

find 'em together, Sun-top. But I might have known you were convent-bred. You've got the air of it—only you've got something else, too. And now I'm going to hear the whole story. I know there's a story. Little ladies like you don't pack a grip and travel a few hundred miles at no notice at all without a reason—and to visit an old uncle who was a perfect stranger until a week ago." His face was grave now. "It was a rash thing to do, Sun-top, and you must have kept your guardian angel in dreadful anxiety. I hope you can give me reasons for it, I do, indeed! I'd hate to think you one of those foolish flyaways that I read about in the newspapers—when I happen to get 'em," he added.

He drummed on the table a minute.

"And you, John, my boy!" He turned to the little lad who sat watching him with eager, observant eyes. "You have a story, too, no doubt, but I'll hear Cecilia Mary's first. You run along out to Old Erin and make friends with her. Maybe, if she likes you, she'll let you ride on her to the top of the trail after a while, when she gets rested."

So John went, gleefully, and Father Pat, serious of mien, turned toward his niece.

"We'll have it now, Sun-top."

Cecil began. First, with the fact of her imminent marriage, which she had firmly made up her mind should not take place. Back she went, step by step,



to the first meeting with Malcolm Travers, her promise given without thought and to please her mother. Back farther still to her father's earlier days, to the days of her simple life, when they were "just ordinary people" in "the little flat in Sixty-fifth street." And because Father Pat was kind and gentle and seemed to understand so well, her tongue was loosened. He could see it all, the priest with the wise blue eyes. No one had to explain the ambitious mother, the man intensely desirous of success—to whom that success came beyond all his dreams, and of what followed after; how one obstacle after the other was removed, and how desires mounted high, so that that which was most eagerly sought was the thing just beyond reach. And, it secured, another bauble dangled, glittering in the sun, that a woman's vanity might seize upon it! And this vanity would use son or daughter or husband in order to rise, ruthlessly. Yet Cecilia loved her—"I love her dearly, but I fear her, too." She told him all, her appeal to Senator Hayden, to her lover, and then her consultation with Mother Philippa, who warned her not to go on with the affair, but to tell her people so. She had meant to go to Renie Ward's—had left her home to look up the trains—and there, in the station, she met little John Bidwell, who was setting out for Silver Lode, Nevada. That decided her. Now she was here and this was the first day of June, and if he would consent, she would write to her people on the seventh,



telling them where she was. For the tenth was her father's birthday and the day of the wedding, and she did not want them to know of her whereabouts until that day was past.

"And," she added quietly, "though I am not going to marry Malcolm Travers, my mother, if she knew where I was this minute, would come here at once. She is probably on her way to Renie Ward's. She will go there, prepared to laugh away my girlish fears, my childish nonsense, to appeal to my love for her, to ask me to make her happy, not to bring defeat to her in her hour of victory. It is not my mother's fault, altogether; she is intoxicated."

Father Pat nodded.

"She can't see, Father Pat—and she has a strength of will as powerful as her ambition. You have no idea. People smile at her in their sneering way; she overlooks them—just uses them and steps on past them. They hate her, too. If she weren't my mother, and I didn't love her, I'm sure I'd detest her."

"Sun-top," said Father Pat, "you're drawing a very sharp picture. Could you tell me, perhaps, *why* you love her when she's ridden rough-shod over you like this?"

Cecilia was silent an instant, frowning.

"Well," she began, "she's my mother. She's lovely, too, stately and tall, like a queen, so that

you'd think she was just getting back the things that belong to her. And I remember earlier days, when Father used to sit with me on his knee and tell us the story of the Connemara hills. One night—"

"Go on, my dear little girl."

"One night she, too, sat beside us, mending... and Father sang...his mother's song. She put her hand over his mouth. 'Tom,' she said, 'the Irish have one great fault. Just when they're on the point of winning, a gleam from the past melts their hearts within them. Tom, from this night on, we're never going to look back.'"

Cecil's voice trembled.

"And, lassie?"

"My father never told me another story, nor sang that song again."

Father Pat's shoulders sank a little.

"Well, then—"

"But this Malcolm Travers: I don't love him. He doesn't love me. I'm my own mistress and I shall not go home again unless I can live at least a little bit as I want to. I hate all these things my mother loves—to me it's time wasted. I have a little money—a few hundred dollars. It will keep me until I can get a position. And that's the whole story, Father Pat."

Father Pat covered his eyes with his hands. Cecil did not know what a picture she had drawn, how

she had sketched these characters so that they stood out as vividly as if he knew them in the flesh. His brother Thomas! Well, often and often, he had heard his mother say—God rest her dear soul!—“Tommy’ll get along. He’s the only one in the family who has a hard streak. The rest of you have hearts as big as your bodies. But Tommy’ll get along.” And Tommy had “got along.” Tommy *was* getting along! But he wondered if the blue-eyed Irish mother’s spirit had not crept into this girl who reminded him of her so much.

“This is no shack for you, Sun-top,” he said now. “But you came to me and I won’t send you away.”

Cecilia’s face glowed.

“You might have been braver, and stayed to face it. That would have been the more courageous thing to do. But as long as you know yourself so well it is good to remember that running away is decent when one can’t resist temptation, or isn’t strong enough of spirit to stand much battering. Discretion has always been the better part of valor. But what under the sun am I going to do with you? If you were homely now, or had a crooked nose, I wouldn’t be the least bit alarmed. But there’s not a girl like you for miles around—I’ve never seen another who could bring the sun with her into a room, and there’s any number of gallant lads, who never would look at him before, will be casting sheep’s eyes at Father

Pat. This afternoon I'll ride over to Mrs. Miller's—"

"I'm going to stay with Mrs. Nora nights," said Cecil, "and take care of your house during the day. Didn't you know that?"

"Well...I hadn't thought of it." He looked at her speculatively. "Did you ever hear tell of the Winnereka Ranch, Cecilia Mary?"

"Father Pat," said Cecil gravely, "I never even thought of the State of Nevada until Basil Torrens spoke to me about you. Where is the Winnereka Ranch?"

"It's a good twelve miles from here and there's a sick man on it—a very sick man. He was like to die when he first came, and though he's none of mine, I never pass him by. His name is Hayden, Douglas Hayden, and he was once a senator."

Cecil looked at him with eyes wide.

"Of course—it couldn't ever be *my* Senator Hayden," she said.

"Yet...he comes from New York, and he's not well. And...I shouldn't be surprised. I'll go out of my way a bit when I have Deer Creek for early mass Sunday after next, and find out for you. There's room and to spare for you at Winnereka, Cecil. Even if it isn't your Senator Hayden, he's a fine fellow and Nevada-born."

"I'm staying here, Uncle Pat," said Cecil gravely.



It was the first time she had used the term of relationship and it touched him. "That is, if you—"

"You like Mrs. Nora?"

"Yes, and I'm sure she likes me. At least she acts as if she does, and I'm not going to ask any foolish questions."

"Well, after all, it doesn't matter—and you'll be safe with Michael and Nora. There isn't over much room there, no more than here, but welcome makes an easy resting, and that welcome you're sure of. I'll keep the wee lad with me. He'll take up but small room."

"The wee lad? But his father—"

"Child, dear, he has no father. I buried Jack Bidwell nearly a week ago."

"Dead?"

"Yes. Shot-up—dead, and a sudden death, too. I was with him at the end, but he never said a word to me about the lad's coming out—not one word, or I'd have been on the watch for him or sent word to the school. You've got to comfort the boy, and explain to him, Sun-top. Jack and his partner had a falling out, and there's a sheriff after Loco Dan now, God help him. We'll have to fix up the story for little John Bidwell, and I'll see that no hint comes to his ears of the life his father led—though he died a good Christian death. It was the best thing he ever did, his going out. There's money enough for the

boy until he's seventeen and when he goes back, you'll be with him and see to him."

"The poor little fellow!" said Cecil. She had grown rather pale. "Poor little John! Oh, I shall tell him myself, Father Pat—I wouldn't want anyone else to do it. I've grown to love him already. He hadn't anyone but that father, and now his father is gone!" She was silent a few seconds. Then, standing up, she moved around the table, and put her hand on Father Pat's arm.

"Father Pat," she said, gently, "I want you to think of me as a stranger—I am only that, anyhow—coming to you for guidance. I've been under restraint all my life, it seems to me. At college, you know how it is. There are certain things to do at certain hours. You rise at a certain hour. Everything moves by the clock. That sort of routine you can understand."

He nodded.

"I accepted it. Then, two years ago, when I reached home for good—a woman—I found that my mother wished to supervise my going out and my coming in, how I talked, walked, dressed—to whom I spoke, to whom I did not speak. I subsided. I became a nonentity. I never expressed an opinion, I never solicited attention. I was a fool. Stupid!"

Father Pat shifted her hand and looked up into her face.

"I am telling you the truth. Senator Hayden's championship of me first opened my eyes to the fact that there was danger in this attitude. Since then I have been like a person whose head is just above water. Every once in a while the water covered me, and I had to hold my mouth higher, so that I would not drown. I discovered that the apathy into which I had sunk under the influence of a strong will had become—not a defense, but a weakness. It was almost second nature. I did not want to be roused from it. It was easier to drift than to demand. You see?"

"I see," nodded Father Pat.

"Then came the day I made the great plunge—and when I sat in the train that brought me out here to you I knew I had done one thing: I had cut loose from that part of me which I had grown to fear. So I did not have an instant's hesitation. No matter what happened to me, no matter how you received me, it was worth it—to know that the real Cecilia Emory had found the courage she had just laid aside for a little while."

"Now then, now then," soothed Father Pat, for her voice shook.

"I'm here—and Michael and Nora—though I've been with them only a few hours—they've told me . . . things." She looked about the room. "Father Pat—are you satisfied to live like this?"

He grinned.

"What can't be cured, must be endured, Cecilia Mary."

"No sheets on your bed? No pillows? An old piece of ticking for a towel? The beans on that shelf your food? Stale bread? Imitation coffee?"

"Well, my child—" Father Pat stretched out his long limbs and the smile on his lips crept to his eyes. "One gets used to everything. We have green things from Michael's garden, and I have a patch of my own behind the shack. I had a few fresh eggs—only now the chickens are moulting. Michael's tough little bantams seem to do well here. Michael's a great friend to me."

"Yes," said Cecil gravely, "I can see that. He just simply took charge of me yesterday when I came in on the stage from Bent River and when I got here he went right after Mrs. Nora. And then this morning he returned the horse to Silver Lode."

"Yes," said Father Pat. "That was right."

"I'd like to ride a little," said Cecil. "Couldn't I get a horse for myself?"

"Well," said Father Pat dubiously, "there's Old Erin—when I'm not away—"

"Oh, no—I mean one for myself."

Father Pat looked her straight in the eyes.

"I can't buy you one, Cecilia Mary."

"Uncle Pat!" she was shocked. "I don't mean that. Surely someone would be glad to let me borrow a horse if I paid him for it—"



"Leave that to Michael," said Father Pat. "And follow his advice about riding, too. He knows just where you oughtn't to venture—you've got to be careful."

"I'll be careful—and I'll do as Michael says," answered Cecil. "I've been taught obedience. Obedience! I am perfect in the part!"

"She must be a powerful strong-willed woman," said Father Pat, irrelevantly.

"Oh, she is!" said Cecil. "And she's wonderful, too—she's clever and she's beautiful—Colin is like her, tall and dark and handsome. I never saw anyone I admired more than mother—with the exception of Joyce Moore."

"Joyce?" asked Father Pat. "Joyce... Moore?"

"Yes—the girl Malcolm Travers is in love with, and who will not marry him. She lives with an aunt, a Harriet Joyce, who is, I think, a terrible creature, cross and cranky as can be."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," said Father Pat, running his hand through his white hair. "Say that name again, child. You're sure you have it right?"

"Oh, I know her. I've met her. Lovely, stately—"

"God bless us, but things do give us a terrible jolt once in a while," muttered Father Pat. "And what has God in store for you all, bringing this to me out here—where I've been forgotten for twenty years."

Welcome be His holy will. He's the Master! I can only wait on Him and see what's to come of it."

"Where's the church?" asked Cecil now.

"Oh, St. Joseph's is over at Silver Lode," answered Father Pat. "I'm placed here on the mountains half-way between Silver Lode and Deer Creek, so that sick-calls can reach me from either place without delay. I was at Deer Creek last night. I say mass at Silver Lode at six-thirty on Sunday and I get to Deer Creek at nine for my second mass there. That's on the first Sunday of the month. On the second Sunday, I'm out at Deer Creek at six-thirty and on to Willow Bend at ten-thirty. The third Sunday mass is at Silver Lode at six-thirty and off to Otter Bridge for ten-thirty. If there's a fifth Sunday in the month I like to get to Winnereka Ranch, for I have about a dozen Catholics there. And so it goes on, my dear, and so it has been going on for the last twenty years."

Cecil was staring at him, wide-eyed.

"How many Catholics have you, Uncle Pat?"

"About two hundred altogether, I should judge. And I pick up a stray here and there, and make a convert or two and act as peacemaker when the boys have grievances. It's not a bad life on the whole, Sun-top," he said. "Don't forget I'm a missionary."

"No," said Cecil.

"Of course there are lots of things I'd like to have that I haven't got now. The church is poor, and I can't reserve the Blessed Sacrament in it. But I can't complain, I can't complain! There's no prejudice here, thank God—and the Baptist minister down at Silver Lode is a nice little fellow—he lets my people alone and doesn't do any slandering, which is more than can be said of other mission stations. I often thought myself lucky to have a man like him in that church the other side of Silver Lode."

"Why—" began Cecil. She was startled, indeed. This was her father's brother, who surely did more good in a week than her father did in a year. He lived here, unknown, harrassed, poverty-stricken, thankful that he could work unhampered. Oh, she must be able to do something worth while!

"Father Pat," she said solemnly, "I think God just got tired of my idleness when He helped me make up my mind. Oh, whether I'm here a little while or a long while, won't you let me help?"

Father Pat had a roguish and merry grin, of which no years could deprive him.

"Cecilia Mary," he said, "I'm not a betting man, but if I were in that line of business I'd lay good odds on you increasing the church attendance this coming Sunday at Silver Lode. That'll be helping some. And now about your horse. I've just remembered that Jack Bidwell had a nice little horse that



you can use for a week. I'll send Michael down after him. I'm going to sell him and turn the money over to the boy, but I hate to see the animal going to anyone who wouldn't love him. Jack made a great pet of him."

Later, with her arm about John's shoulders, Cecilia told him of his father's death, pressing his dark head close to her. He was unused to caresses and this was sweet to him, and while he heard her quietly enough there was a mournful expression in the large dark eyes.

"Of course, I didn't know my dad very well," he said, "but at least he belonged to me, and I belonged to him. Now I have nothing at all, only that old school, and I hate it."

"You've got me, John," said Cecil. "On the way out here we adopted each other—to be sister and brother until we reached your father. Now, we've got to say it all over again."

They did, solemnly, and Cecilia added to the formula: "And I will go to Cecilia Emory for everything I need, and in all my troubles, until I am a man."

Then she kissed him, and with the grave seriousness of childhood, he accepted the compact, as if this were all that was necessary to give him one of God's best gifts after a mother—a good sister. It was to prove true, in Cecilia Emory's case. And



Father Pat found them so, with her arms about him, the boy subdued, but not unhappy.

"I've told him, Uncle Pat, and we've adopted each other. We're brother and sister now, and I think we could use an uncle between us, couldn't we, John?"

"Yes, Cecil," said John, his gray eyes fastened on the priest's face.

"We'll talk that over later," said Father Pat. "John will have to tell me a little about himself. You see his father made me his guardian before he died and his father was a Catholic. Did you know that, John?"

"No, sir—no, Father."

"Well, then! And your mother, who died when you were born, was a Catholic, too. Cecilia Mary," he added, turning to her, "I don't think things happen without reason, and unless I make a great mistake there is much good coming out of your visit to Silver Lode."

"I think I see it already," said Cecil. "Here's a little boy all alone in the world finds a sister all by himself; don't you think God did that?"

John looked up at her with a sad smile on his lips.

"You know, Cecil, it's the first time I ever thought of blaming things on God," he said, at which Father Pat laughed.

"See that, Cecil. We know what he means, but

it sounds as if there was a wee bit more to it. You might be a calamity to him yet. How do you like Old Erin, John?"

"She's fine, Father Pat—I think she'd let me ride her."

"Indeed she would, John. She's very sweet-tempered."

"We'll get you a horse of your own and a real cowboy outfit," promised Cecil. "If there isn't anything to fit you, why I'll make it."

And at this the boy's sense of loss became submerged in joyous thoughts of the future. Three days later, Cecil rode into Silver Lode, with John on Michael's horse behind her. By this time she had been over a week away from home and homesickness was the last thought in her mind. She had written several letters, and now she purchased such canned goods as seemed to promise most variety of food. In one of the letters she mailed there was an order to a supply house for the simple furniture which she felt Father Pat's cabin ought to contain. "And now, John, we'll go down and look at the church," she said, when she had attended to her mail and paid for her purchases.

Outside Startin's door a crowd had gathered, for the word had sped through Silver Lode that Father Pat's girl had come to town. As she turned out of Startin's in her neat white blouse and smart skirt, her

golden hair uncovered, a silence fell. Truly, it was a pleasure to look at her. Her blue eyes went over them quickly—they responded with true Western friendliness and big blonde Lon West stepped out of the ranks and made her a sweeping bow.

"If any of us can be of service, Miss Emory," he said, "please command us."

She stood doubtfully. She was no longer the stranger girl of three days before—she was Father Pat's niece; his welcome had given her that assurance.

"Why...I don't know," she said, smiling cheerfully at Lon West. "Perhaps you can help if you care to come with me."

The big fellow's face burned red. He had not expected such an honor.

"Why...I..." he stammered, and caught himself. "Why, of course...I am honored, Miss Emory."

"Yes?" said Cecil. "Well, I am going to St. Joseph's. I want to see what sort of church Father Pat has."

Glances were exchanged. Lon straightened up, and his glance swept the crowd. A few in the rear immediately disappeared.

"I move, gentlemen," he said, "that we all accompany Miss Emory."



## CHAPTER XIV

### ROSARY MOUNTAIN

IT was a queer procession. Cecilia led her horse, Lon West walking beside her, with little John and about a dozen men straggling behind. Before they had gone twenty yards, half of these had disappeared and at the first bend the others found it convenient to slip away also, so that when they came to the door of the chapel not one remained but Lon himself. Cecilia stood gazing at the little log shack. It had evidently been built by the same hands that had erected the cabin on the mountain side—Father Pat's own. Within there were benches—about twenty on each side, and there was a wooden floor. The small altar was of wood, painted white, above it a large wooden crucifix, and farther up, on the wall, a framed picture of St. Joseph, with Our Lord in his arms. Cecilia stood at the rail and looked about her. There were two candlesticks, and a little table at the epistle side, and a chair. There were no statues, but there were some nicely framed "Stations of the Cross"—good pictures, covered with glass. Cecilia found out later that these pictures, the one above the altar, and the marble holy water stoup at the door, were the gifts of a pastor in the East. She caught her breath sharply, her teeth sinking



into her under lip as when she was deeply moved. A mist rose before her eyes. Father Pat had been working here for twenty years. A sob rose in her throat. Lon West touched her arm.

"The people...the Catholics...are very poor, Miss Emory," he said gently. "And the rest of us...well, no church means much to any of us, I reckon."

She nodded.

"At Deer Creek...it's not as good as this, and the other places have no church at all. I know, because I helped Father Pat fix this up for Christmas—and I might add I'm not his kind, Miss Emory."

Again she nodded, but she hardly heard him; her face was very sad as she turned from the rail, and when she closed the door of the church behind her, she stood, her hands resting on the rough wood, her eyes downcast. He seemed to realize that she was greatly moved, but he did not know why. He thought she was upset because her uncle had to serve in such poverty, so he tried to comfort her.

"They're really not bad, Miss Emory," he said. "Last year they bought a nice wood stove, and it makes the place very comfortable when it gets cold. And they've made fine shutters for the windows. Besides, Father Pat is used to all this by now."

She looked at him with a shadow in her eyes.

"And God, too, I suppose," she said. "But I'm sure the people are good—Father Pat loves them. He says they have hearts of gold. It isn't that. It's the waste that goes on while—" She made a characteristic gesture with her hands. She thought of the ring which she had dropped into Malcolm Travers' pocket, and of the one just like it which Colin had bought for Muriel. "It will set you back a couple of 'thou,' Dad, but she's worth it." And her father had nodded, carelessly. "I'll buy you the finest string of pearls...or a diamond tiara," he had said to her—and to Cecilia, at that moment, the pearls seemed to be about her throat, choking her. Oh, she thought, with passionate fervor, she was glad that she had come out here—glad, glad! Yes, God *had* done this thing for her. And now she would do something for God.

She cleared her throat.

"I've never seen anything quite so poor," she said, a little unsteadily, "and it hurts. Oh, of course, I've read of how our priests are working, but I didn't realize it."

The tremor in her voice subdued Lon West. He could scarcely sympathize with her, such a matter was not within his ken, but she was the loveliest thing he had ever seen and he was proud to be walking beside her. They went back to Startin's, where she found her purchases packed and ready for her, and as soon as she had disappeared down the trail Lon

West was surrounded by those who had vanished at the mention of her destination.

"She sure was charmed with Silver Lode chapel," he said, in his drawling tones.

"What did she say about it?" asked one, curiously, but Lon West shrugged his shoulders.

"She sure was pleased with its interior decoration," he added. "She never saw a church so handsomely got up." And while they waited for more, he turned on his heel and walked away, adding as he did so: "For further particulars, see the lady."

But Cecilia on the way home, trusting herself to the sure-footed little horse, was recounting her plans to John, who listened to her, round-eyed.

"And Father Pat is to know nothing about this until it's done," she said. "We'll get Mr. Michael to help, and that big man—he looks so strong, he'll be good to handle the heavy things!" Poor Lon! This prosaic remark might have hurt his growing interest in her. "We'll wait till Father Pat goes away for several days and then we'll fix everything. First the house, and then the church."

"But the money, Cecil—"

"I think I have enough to do that," said the girl, "and it could not be better spent. We must leave a substantial church and a nice house when we go away, John. Nothing silly or hard to keep right and clean, but plain, and strong and sensible."



Cecilia had brought nothing with her that could be used to make Father Pat's shack more comfortable. Her bag contained only the most necessary articles, and if she had not thrust in, at the last minute, two or three extra blouses rolled into a tight bundle, she would have been at a loss. But in some unaccountable way she found that nothing mattered—and that even in the past few days the old life seemed the more unreal of the two. This could only be due to one thing—her sense of freedom.

She had bought cans of fruit and other delicacies such as Startin's shelves afforded, and had had a chat with Jim Startin himself in regard to future orders. And she had been experimenting with pan and pot at her uncle's primitive hearth-stone, and though she emerged blackened of hands and with a smudge or two on her delicate face, she found out that even a hearth-fire can be made to bow to superior culinary skill.

When they went back, Nora was examining the bags of white muslin into which Cecilia had portioned "that dreadful coffee." Michael was at the "green patch," and while John took upon himself the glad work of putting the horses in the little lean-to Father Pat had thrown up for them, Cecil told Nora what she had done. But Nora grumbled.

"You shouldn't go into town lest Michael be with ye," she said. "There's a lot of those idle do-noth-



ings at Startin's, particularly since that woman's show'll be going on tonight and tomorrow night—"

"Show?" asked Cecil, puzzled.

"Why, yes... there's some kind of a spiritualist woman going to give a show. Didn't you see the big posters at Startin's?"

"I never looked," confessed Cecil.

"Well, it means that every man and woman that can get to Silver Lode tonight will get there," said Nora. "And as usual Jim Startin is improving his time by giving a dance. Do you mean to tell me Lon West didn't say anything about that dance?"

"Not one word," said Cecil. "Is—is Mr. West a do-nothing?"

"He sure is," affirmed Nora. "An' I like his impudence standing and talking to Father Pat's girl."

"But I talked to him," said Cecil, "and what's more, out of all that crowd he was the only one who came over to the church with me. And he told me he'd helped Father Pat fix it up last Christmas—but that he never went to church because he wasn't anything."

"Oh!" said Nora, and her hands, which had been resting on her hips, fell limply. "So Lon West went to church with you? That's not bad."

"I thought it was very nice—"

But they were interrupted. Michael O'Brien's voice, hardly civil, fell upon their ears.

"We've come over to see Miss Emory, Mike, and we want to talk to Father Pat first."

"Well, Father Pat isn't here, and Miss Emory isn't meeting visitors."

"Listen, Mike—haven't I always been a good friend of yours? Haven't I? Can't you just let us talk to her and invite her to the dance tonight? She hasn't met any honest-to-goodness bunch of Westerners yet—"

Cecil giggled. Nora held up a warning finger—then stood in the doorway.

"Perhaps she isn't wanting to meet them," she said caustically. "Well, I declare. Ye lost no time, I'll be bound! Benny Barnard. And Jim Hannaford! And Jule Smith! Honest-to-goodness bunch of Westerners—"

"We've appointed ourselves a committee of three to ask Miss Emory to this dance at Startin's," said Benny Barnard, stubbornly, "and we're going to stay here until we see her."

"Ye'll have to see Father Pat first, then," said Nora. "Now, don't be foolish, boys. This little girl has come on a visit to her old uncle, and he feels responsible for her. And he's handed the responsibility to us when he isn't here. So have sense. He'll be back soon. You wait on him, and ask him about it."

But Cecil, very quietly and determinedly, put her

hand on Nora's shoulder and moved out in front of her. The sunlight set her hair glistening and her blue eyes were dancing as she gazed up at them.

"Gentlemen," she said, "I can answer just as well as Father Pat. I wouldn't go to a dance while I'm here—my time with my uncle is too short as it is and I don't want to miss one minute of my visit. But I certainly thank you very much and appreciate your courtesy."

They swept their hats to the ground, and then turning their horses galloped back along the trail. Nora watched them go.

"I suppose I'll have to be shooing them away like this all the time," she said.

"Yes," nodded Cecil, "do shoo them, but don't bring poor Father Pat into it! And now I'm going up to the very top of that crag and practice rifle-shooting."

"Be sure you don't look down the barrel to see if it's loaded, Miss Cecilia Mary," said Michael, with a very grave face, and Cecil laughed as she swung the gun under her arm, and went off.

But she did not practice her rifle-shooting; instead she made her way leisurely enough to the top of the cliff, and seated herself. She had been here the preceding day, with John, and now she came back to it alone because it satisfied her so completely; and the perpetual "why" asserted itself. Soon—in a few





SHE WOULD CALL THIS SPOT ROSARY MOUNTAIN





weeks at the utmost—this life would be left behind her, and even at the very thought came a sensation of regret. Everything was so big out here. There was room to breathe, the air seemed fresh from God, and she was surely close to God up here on the mountain-tops, closer than she had ever felt in the valleys of the city streets. She took her beads from her pocket. She would call this spot Rosary Mountain...and perhaps...some day...

She said the joyful mysteries through, meditating thoughtfully on each one in turn. And when she had finished she sat with her chin cupped in her hand. In a little while she would go to confession to her own uncle, and she would receive the Bread of Life from her uncle's hand! Her own uncle—a priest of God. She wondered if her father knew. If he did, how could he keep from boasting of it? That wonderful, that mystical connection between this world and the next, between God and His creature—the priest! Her father's own brother—a priest!

She pitied him, she loved him, but most of all, she revered him. And there was something of all three in her manner toward him, which Father Pat himself felt and did not try to explain. And when at last the shadows began to lengthen she rose and went down the trail to the log hut. Father Pat was home. Seated on the doorstep, with Mike on

the bench that held the big water-bucket, they were engaged in strong argument.

"Will you listen, man?" Father Pat was saying. "It isn't afraid of your faith I am at all; I'm afraid of your hot head. You'll do something that will start a fight as sure as God made little apples—and then they'll say I sent you there to break it up."

"Sure, now, if 'twas a religious meeting I would not ask to go," said Michael O'Brien, "but I'm plain curious an' I've never been to one of the things in me life."

"They're all fakes, Michael."

"I know that, Father. But it'll be lots of fun! Old Beany Bosworth'll sure be there and maybe he'll try to talk to Maggie. Oh, lor', lor', can't you see it? Hear it?" Michael doubled up on the bench. "Here's Miss Cecil," he added. "Maybe, now, you'll like to come along with me?"

"Where are you going, Mr. Michael?"

"There's that spiritual show down in Startin's tonight—Madame Caroline she calls herself—a weird-looking creature, skinny as a rail. It's the first chance I've ever had in all me life to see one of them working. Come on along with me, Miss Cecilia, dear."

"Indeed not," said Cecilia, emphatically. "A priest came to our college once and showed us just how they did all their tricks—he did them himself for us right there. Indeed I won't go, Mr. Michael."

"When it isn't nonsense it's deviltry," added Father Pat.

"Sure how could any more deviltry get into Silver Lode?" pleaded Michael. "Glory be, I'd give something to see Madame Caroline alone for two minutes. I'd put her up to more knowledge of the buckos of Silver Lode than her little devils could ever find out for her. Especially the three swashbuckling heroes that followed Miss Cecilia up the trail a bit while since to ask her to the dance."

"What? Already?" asked Father Pat.

"Indeed, yes. An' the fun's only startin'. It's a fence you'll have to be buildin' around her if she stays here any length of time. There's any number of good-looking, likable chaps, Miss Cecil, would be glad to be your slaves for life, if ye—"

"Don't be filling Cecil's head with nonsense," began Father Pat.

But Cecil laughed.

"There's no room for nonsense in it," she said. "Uncle Pat, I was down to your little church today."

Under cover of their talk Michael O'Brien slipped off, for he had fully determined to go to the "spiritual" and he was afraid that Father Pat would forbid him outright. And Father Pat, explaining to his interested listener the early days of Silver Lode and the beginning of St. Joseph's, was cut short by a



rider who came up from Deer Creek on his way over the trail.

"Old Monty was very bad when I left his cabin," he told the priest. "He said something about you coming—" His eyes were fastened on Cecilia and now Father Pat had to present him.

"This is the young lady to whom you mailed the letter a short while back," he added, wondering why Cecil smiled (she had recalled the fifty-cent stamp). "I'll have to be going on to old Monty, Cecil. I promised him I'd come whenever he sent for me. He's a good, faithful soul, old Monty." And then when Ned had gone, "I'll pass Michael's about nine-thirty," he said, "and I'll give you a hail, if you're not in bed."

"When can I go to confession?" she asked.

"Oh, the confessions are in the morning, before mass begins," he said. "Lots of time for that."

"Well, when you hail, I'll have a cup of coffee ready," she said. "And maybe something better, if Nora'll let me fuss—"

"By the look of things," smiled Father Pat, "Nora's glad to have you fuss." He whistled and Old Erin answered with a whinny. And Cecilia stood looking after him as he went away, shading her eyes with her hand. She had only just begun to realize, she thought, what wonderful work he was doing, how hard it was, and how little comfort he

had! And then Michael peeped out at her from the doorway.

"He's off—and so am I—down to Silver Lode," he said, "an' be saying nothing to Nora, Miss Cecilia, unless she says something to you."

"Not a word, Mr. Michael," smiled Cecil, as she called to John. "Let's be setting out for Mrs. Nora's ourselves, boy, for it will soon be dark."

They found Nora alone in the cabin. Fortunately, she made no inquiries about Michael, for her mind was full of another care.

"Do you think you'll be lonesome if I left ye for an hour or two?" she questioned. "Mattie Jones' man is not well, it's his lungs, poor chap, and I'd like to look in on them. He's one of Father Pat's converts and they take it kindly if you make inquiries. I'll light the lantern, and be home as soon as I can."

"Why," said Cecil, "I hope you wouldn't be staying on my account. Haven't I John here to keep me company? For Father Pat has gone to old Monty's and I promised him a cup of coffee when he passes here about ten. There'll be one for you, too, Nora, when you come along. And I'd surely like to mess a bit, and see if I could make a cake."

"Good glory, child, mess all ye've a mind to," said Nora. "I'll grant there's a charm in your fingers, Miss Cecilia, but I doubt it's working on that old wood stove."

"Never mind the stove," chided Cecil. "I think you don't talk right to that stove—that's what's the matter with it."

So Nora took the lantern in one hand, and with a shawl over her arm set out, while John and Cecil made preparations for the great experiment. Perhaps Cecil did have a charm in her fingers, for after much careful maneuvering the cake was finished. She stood it on the table, a brown, crusty, sweet-smelling loaf. And then she and John stood off admiring it.

"I never made a better-looking one, John," she said, half-laughing. A knock sounded on the door.

"Oh, my, there's Father Pat—and the cake's too hot to cut and the coffee isn't ready. You're an hour earlier than you said you'd be," she continued as she threw open the door. But Father Pat did not enter. Instead Lon West paused on the threshold—only an instant. Then he came in and closed the door behind him. He was irreproachably and gorgeously clad in the conventional outfit of the hills.

"I reckon I've got to have just one little word with you, Miss Emory," he said.

## CHAPTER XV

### FOUND

CECILIA stared at this apparition with eyes that seemed twice their natural size. Slowly she loosened Nora's apron from about her neck, and John sprang up from the table and drew close to her, as if desirous of protecting her. The strange young man smiled into her startled face.

"Miss Emory, I'm here to ask you to do me a very great favor," he said.

"Well," said Cecil, not unkindly, "I'm sure you've been mighty nice to me, Mr. West, and if I can grant this favor...why, I will."

"You are...adorable, Miss Emory."

The girl lifted her shoulders.

"Really, Mr. West?"

"And if Father Pat were here I know he'd say a good word for me."

"Oh! Would that be necessary?" She looked at him coolly, and her eyes were like blue ice. "If you want me to do anything, please tell me what it is. And if you want a favor, just ask it. Then I'll see."

The young man lowered his sombrero and folded his arms.



"There's a dance tonight at Startin's," he said, "and I sure would like the pleasure of your company!"

Cecil's teeth flashed.

"That's a favor I could not grant, if I would, Mr. West," she said. "I wish it had been something else, something really in my power."

"Why isn't it in your power?" he asked. "A short ride down the mountains—just as you are—one turn on the floor—and you'll be back here in an hour and a half."

"But my uncle would not wish it, Mr. West. And even if he did, I do not care to go." She spoke with quiet decision.

Lon West shrugged his shoulders.

"We don't stand on much ceremony, Miss Emory, and a girl as pretty as you has a right to give a fellow a chance. I've bet everything I own in the world—even my shirt—with those three chaps you saw today, that you'd give me one dance. Will you, Miss Emory?"

Cecil frowned, her eyes meeting his.

"I won't, Mr. West."

"I'm sorry, Miss Emory, if you don't like it—but you've got to. Come, now. Be a real sport for once in your life."

They were unfortunate words. Cecil's eyes blazed. "Be a sport," Colin had said. "Buck up,

child! Be a sport!" had been her father's remark. "Take a sporting chance," said Malcolm Travers. And now—Cecil looked at this daring young man who, in line with all the others who had come into her life, tried to cow her into going against her own desires. And so unconsciously had she become part of this country into which she had entered a stranger, that when her hand fell on the hilt of the little pistol—Father Pat's gift—thrust into the pocket of her skirt, she pulled it out, quickly, and leveled it.

"Be a sport," she said. "Yes—I will. But in my own way, Mr. West. It seems to me that the synonym for sport is fool. I'm not going to be any kind of a sport excepting the kind I choose to be, and if you look at me like that, or try to come near me, I warn you I am a very bad shot. I never did anything more dangerous than hit a bull's-eye in an archery tournament, so if this goes off I can't promise it won't hit you. Just you sit down there on that stool, Mr. West, and wait for Father Pat. You can be the sport, if you like."

Lon West looked at her uneasily. Her face was white, and he wasn't quite sure what the expression in her eyes meant. She was neither a silly girl nor a scared tenderfoot. She was hopping mad. "Be a sport!" The very echo of the words made her jiggle her revolver carelessly, and he wilted.

"Say! Easy, there," he warned. "That thing's liable to go off."

"I'm telling you that," said Cecil. "It is."

"It's no crime to ask a girl to a dance, Miss Emory."

"Maybe not—but you didn't ask. You told me I had to come—I *had* to come!"

"I take it back, Miss Emory," he said pleadingly. "Let me off and I'll go away—honestly I will."

She looked at him reflectively.

"You're strong, Mr. West—you could lift me up with one hand—and you've bet your shirt! No . . . I don't think I'll trust you. I'll wait until Father Pat comes. But we won't waste any time. John, get out your catechism, and move that lamp near you on the table. Study out loud."

So Cecil stood, the revolver between her fingers, and John repeated the words of the catechism, Cecil helping him. No more welcome sound ever smote on any ears than the hoofbeats of Old Erin outside the door and Father Pat's lusty voice calling Cecilia Mary. In a trice the revolver was hidden in her skirt pocket, and Cecil was bending over the stove, drawing the coffee pot nearer to the leaping flame.

"The fire smells good," said Father Pat. "The mountain air is sharp." He saw Lon West then, and his lips parted, while West shifted uneasily.

"Mr. West came to ask me to the dance, Father Pat," said Cecilia Mary. "And he thought he'd wait for you."





SO CECIL STOOD, THE REVOLVER BETWEEN HER FINGERS





"Don't be silly, Lon," said Father Pat. "You know I wouldn't let my niece go to Startin's. I've got nothing against you at all, but she's mine, and I'm responsible for her."

"You see, Mr. West?" said Cecil sweetly. "Now are you quite satisfied? And Uncle Pat, don't you think we could give him some hot coffee, too?"

"No harm in that, child, no harm in that," said the priest.

"By Jove—you *are* a sport!" said Lon West, under his breath. "And I'll be darned if I care whether I lose my shirt or not!" He waved his hand. "I'll not indulge in the hot coffee," he added, "but I'm awfully obliged to you just the same."

"What's he talking about?" asked Father Pat, as the young man went out.

"Something about a shirt," said Cecilia, innocently enough. "There's the cake, Uncle Pat," she added, "and it was cooked in Nora's stove. I talked to it—I honestly think even a stove has feelings."

Father Pat sat down to the home-baked cake and coffee.

"Cecilia Mary," he said, "it's a lucky thing for your old uncle that you'll be going soon. Tomorrow you'll write to your folks, and then away you'll vanish. I'll be glad when you're off, Cecilia Mary. I never knew my mother when she was young, but she must have been like you, for you've her ways,

the very ways she had when she was older and had the cares of a pack of children on her, God bless her."

"Father Pat, I've never been so contented in my life as I've been with you," said Cecil, in a low voice. "I wish I could arrange to stay forever."

"That's nonsense, *avich*, and the sign of a soft nature. You've got work to do that you've been trained for—and it mustn't be lost out here in the mountains with a poor old man whose stint is nearly done. You've brought me sunshine, Cecilia Mary—not that I lack God's glorious sun on the top of these mountains, but you've put it in my heart—so I want you to get right back where you belong, before I get too used to it. Moreover, this is a mighty fine cake, and I'd like to know why you're eating none of it. There's surely magic in that stove of Nora's."

Cecil's laughing answer died on her lips, for there was another interruption as Michael and Nora came in together. Nora's face lighted up with pleasure when she saw the priest.

"Father Pat, I think if that Jones fellow can get along another month, we'll save him yet," she said.

"There's no telling," said Father Pat. "But come and see what Cecilia Mary did with your old stove."

"She made that!" exclaimed Nora, in astonishment.

"I tell you, Nora, she's got a fairy hidden in her pocket. She caught him of a Friday night at the full of the moon when he came to get his brogeen mended. And he taught her how to coax angel cake out of a rusty stove in the hills of the West."

"Sure, your Reverence, 'twould seem so," said Nora.

"And do the fairies come to Moycullen?" asked Cecil with the most innocent face in the world, at which Nora clapped her hands in glee and Michael hit his arms together as if he were warming himself.

"'Tis the fairy itself is talking," said Father Pat. He looked at her with keen interest. "The mind of a child is a wonderful thing. Will you tell me, *acushla*, how you remember Moycullen, and how long it is since you heard the name?"

"Not since I was seven years old, surely—though Father often mentioned it before that when he was telling of the Connemara giants. Of course, he never could say just how the giants got there—"

"He couldn't!" said Michael O'Brien, with some heat. "Well, me mother was a Connemara woman, though me father was from the North. An' sure everyone knows that the Connemara giants were descended from the Grecians who lived in Ireland after the flood. Parthalon was the first one's name; himself went to Ballyshannon, but it was his son who traveled as far south as Connaught."



"But in school—" began Cecil.

"Sure, what can the schools teach ye about Con-nemara?" asked Michael. "I remember—"

"Never you mind, Michael," put in Father Pat. "And don't you start one of those yarns of yours or we'll be here till it's time to set out for Silver Lode tomorrow morning. It's Michael O'Brien has the seductive tongue—so signs by the wife he got," he added, and Cecil giggled. She loved it—every word of it.

"Oh, but, Father dear, don't be going until I tell you what happened this night," said Michael. "It isn't Irish, either—I went to the spiritualist's."

"Um!" said Father Pat, looking at him with stern eyes. "Didn't I tell you—"

"But you didn't forbid it—no, no, you didn't forbid it! And sure, Father, 'twas wonderful. She told us some good things about what's going on in the other world. An' by-an'-by, when she asked for those who would like to talk to any who had passed over, I stood up in me place, an' said I'd give a good deal to have a word from me dear old father and mother who had hit the last trail many years agone."

Nora looked at him in horror.

"Michael O'Brien, there'll be a judgment on you for this," she said. "Not letting the dead rest—"

"Go 'long with you, woman!" said Michael. "Is it touch my dead anyone like her could be doing? She'll never come next nor nigh them in this world, nor in the next, unless she changes her tactics. But by golly, so soon as I asked that question she yells an' stiffens out in her chair. An' by-an'-by she begins to speak: 'There are two people here beside me. An' one of them is called...Michael. He would speak to his son, Michael O'Brien.'

"'That's me,' says I."

"Your Reverence," said Nora, "you hear him yourself. Put the heavy penance on him—"

"Ah, woman, will ye wait? I said: 'Michael O'Brien, father to me, where is me mother, Mary?'

"'She is here beside me,' said a faint voice, like a whistling whisper it was.

"'Are ye together?'

"'Always.'

"'Are ye happy?'

"'We are—and we're waiting for you. Waiting for you, all the time, and shall be ready to greet you when you come.'

"'Good,' says I. 'It's a great satisfaction to know it!' An' no sooner had I said those words than the lady screeched again, the lights went up, and she sat looking at me, her eyes like big owl's eyes.

"'Michael O'Brien,' she says, 'you came here to scoff.'

“ ‘I did, ma’am,’ says I.

“ ‘You remain to pray,’ says she.

“ ‘No, ma’am,’ says I.

“ ‘And why not?’ says she, ‘after talking to the father and mother that bore ye?’

“ ‘Because, ma’am,’ says I, ‘I couldn’t have been talking to them, an’ it must have been someone else’s father an’ mother, for sorra a word of English had me father or mother when they were living, an’ how could they understand a word of it when they were dead?’

“ ‘What are you talking about?’ says she.

“ ‘Why, they used the Gaelic, ma’am, an’ never another word did they speak but it, ma’am. An’ it’s sore I would be to lose me father an’ mother that only spoke the decent Irish, an’ get ’em back with the English so pat on ’em.’ An’ at that everybody howled an’ the spiritual broke up, an’ I guess Madame Caroline isn’t feeling so friendly toward me just now.”

To describe Michael’s gestures and mimicry in words would be impossible. Even Nora, who was really shocked, was moved to mirth, and Father Pat shook with laughter as he stood up. “John’s eyes will be closed all the way down the trail,” he said. “Let’s get away before he falls fast asleep.” He drew the boy toward him affectionately, and when

they got outside lifted him to Old Erin's back, and so started for home.

But Michael, while he and Nora were finishing the last of Cecil's cake, suddenly put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a sheet of newspaper. "It's a week old, Miss Cecilia, but there's something interesting on the front page. It came packed in a case with some goods Startin got, an' I helped open it up. An' he showed me this the first thing, an' said he knew you'd want to see it for yourself."

Cecil sat down and spread the paper out before her. It was dated the second day after she had left. The black headlines stared at her.

AN ELOPEMENT IN HIGH LIFE  
Colin Emory and Muriel Carter Evade a  
Formal Wedding

And farther on:

"It is supposed that the reason for the elopement is the serious illness of Miss Cecil Emory, who, suffering with appendicitis, has been removed to a hospital, presumably Dr. Morton's, though the family will not affirm or deny this, only saying that she is not yet out of danger. The double wedding was set for June 10th, and since it will have to be postponed, it is presumed that Miss Muriel and Mr. Emory took affairs in their own hands. The fiancé of Miss Emory, Mr. Malcolm Travers, is the only son of the late Malcolm Travers, Third, who can trace his family back to—"



"To Adam," said Cecil, under her breath. She was trembling with excitement. Through it all she saw her mother's hand, and she realized that a postponement meant nothing but just that to the older woman.

She continued to read:

"The wedding, thus unavoidably delayed, will probably be quietly celebrated as soon as the pretty bride-elect recovers, or later in the Fall. Nothing definite can be said at this time, of course, and the deepest sympathy is extended to Mr. Travers and the Emory family. Miss Cecil's rare blonde beauty will be remembered—"

Cecil closed her eyes a moment.

"That sounds," she said, "as if they were speaking of me in the past tense."

She sat with the paper lying before her on the table, and her glance fell on a note farther down.

"Miss Harriet Joyce, whose niece is Miss Joyce Moore, was taken severely ill last evening, and there is little hope of her recovery. Her entire right side is paralyzed. Miss Joyce's illness recalls the marriage of her sister Margaret to the well-known clubman, John Moore. The marriage was a most unhappy one, though it endured four years, and six months after the decree was granted to Mrs. Moore, her divorced husband met with the accident out West which resulted in his death. Mrs. Moore and Miss

Joyce had always made their home with Miss Harriet, and since her mother's death, twelve years ago, Miss Joyce has devoted herself entirely to her aunt."

"Maybe," said Cecil, "that is it. Miss Harriet was the barrier—and if she dies—perhaps they can get married, then." Almost as if her mother were standing at her elbow, she seemed to hear her voice. "Don't be absurd, Cecil," it said. Every inflection was there—the little note of sarcasm, of reproof: "Don't be absurd, Cecil!" She crumpled the newspaper in her hand, and rising, went into the room partitioned off from the living-room of the shack. Here her own couch was made up, and as she put her head on the hard, rough pillow, she said, half-aloud: "No, Mother, I shall never be absurd again. Those days are quite gone by."

She had not the faintest idea that her mother was anywhere near, yet she could not shake off the sensation of her presence.

"I promised on Rosary Mountain," she said, "that I meant to live my own life, according to that which I thought best for God and myself, and other people. I'm going to keep my word." And so saying, she fell asleep.

But Father Pat had not yet found the rest he so sorely needed, with but a few hours between him and the early moment of rising, for as he rounded the turn a light was shining from the window of his shack.

"It's another sick-call," thought Father Pat. "Well, God's holy will be done," and he urged Old Erin into a trot and lifted the boy off her back. He threw the door open, with his hand on the mare's head, waiting for the word to go. A young man was sitting at the table and as Father Pat came in he stood up. It was Basil Torrens.

"Good glory!" said Father Pat. "Basil Torrens! What's brought you here? It's all right, Erin, old girl. Get into the stall with you, and I'll take care of you later."

"We came in on the afternoon train, and we had to wait for that old rattletrap to get to Silver Lode—" began Basil Torrens.

"We?" said Father Pat.

"Yes—Cecil Emory's father and mother." Basil Torrens looked at him eagerly. "Miss Cecil is—with you?" His voice sounded strained.

"She's here—but not with me."

"And safe?"

"Perfectly safe."

"Thank God," said Basil Torrens, and he sat down suddenly, and Father Pat knew he must have been laboring under a great fear. "Her father and mother stayed at Startin's—I promised I'd go back with word to them as soon as I found out."



"I suppose they've blamed you?" said Father Pat. "Oh, don't hesitate. Cecilia has told me all about it. It's your fault, eh?"

"They haven't said as much," said Basil Torrens, "but of course, that was implied."

"Um," said Father Pat. He drew a stool over to the table. "I've something to ask you now, and I want the truth. The girl is well, and in two months from now you wouldn't know but she was Western born and bred, and that's the highest compliment I can pay her." He looked at him quietly an instant. "Basil," he said, "ever since you showed your true metal, the night you got Clarke out of shaft No. 3 down Bent River way—and God knows it was the work of a brave man!—I've respected you. And if you know the truth about Cecilia Mary I wish you'd tell it to me. Looking at the face of her—like a flower of beauty—I couldn't doubt the strange story she told me. But is it possible there are men and women in this world willing to tie two lives together for the sake of what they call prestige—I mean, now, women and men like my brother Tom, who has decent blood in his veins? Maybe she's only thought all this in a romantic way, like girls will."

There was keen anxiety in the priest's tones, and Basil Torrens realized that no matter how he answered, the truth must hurt him. He hated to think so ill of his own brother, but he hated just as strongly



the thought that Cecilia could be mistaken. He looked straight into Father Pat's blue eyes—thinking how like they were to Cecil's own.

"The first time I saw your niece," he said, "was at a dinner given by the elect, and as the promised bride of Malcolm Travers, one of *the* men who is what he is by divine right—born to the purple. I saw her, too, make the sign of the Cross before she began her meal."

"Glory be!" said Father Pat.

"They laughed at her, of course. Who wouldn't?"

"Did you?"

"No—I did worse, though I did not realize it for some time afterward. I fell in love with her then and there."

"You could do a great many things more harmful than that."

"No, I could not. It is the most harmful thing that could have happened to me. When I left the East before I thought I cared for Joyce Moore. I came back cured, and mildly curious—and found this little girl in her place. And I never was so attracted by anyone in my whole life. Think of it! That was a nice position to be in, wasn't it?"

"It was—peculiar," agreed Father Pat.

"I saw enough of her then to realize that there was something wrong, and that she was not in love with Malcolm Travers. But I could not fathom it,

and I never asked. I was afraid to ask. And then I told her about you. She wrote to you, and I shall never forget her joy the day she received your reply."

Father Pat nodded.

"I thought no more of it—it was just an incident, and I never connected her folks with it. Then, a few days later, she called me on the telephone and asked me to give her my word that I would not mention that she had received a letter from you until after the tenth of June. I promised readily, thinking the mother had found it out, and that the poor kid was trying to avoid a fuss."

He stopped suddenly and Father Pat moved impatiently—he was keyed up to the tale.

"As I told her then, I was going to Washington next morning for my firm, and I did not expect to get back—in fact I meant to make it my business not to. I was tangled up as it was, but you can imagine my horror when I picked up a New York paper and read that Colin and Muriel (she's told you about them?) had eloped and that Cecil was ill with appendicitis. I was so upset by this that I got right back to the city, and I didn't care what they thought. I went to Mr. Emory's office, and managed to see him. I was frightfully shocked. He looked like a man who had been ill a year."

"Um," said Father Pat.

"'Good Lord, Mr. Emory,' I said, 'I've come to

inquire about Miss Cecil. She's not in danger, is she?'

"Perhaps he had reached the end of his endurance—perhaps— Well, he broke down then. We closed the office door, and he told me all about it. The hospital idea was just a bluff. She was gone. She'd never meant to go through with the marriage, and had planned to visit a school-companion in Vermont. She never reached there, either. They had engaged private detectives—scores of them. No trace.

" 'I've got to keep it quiet,' he said, 'when I want the whole world to help me look for her! I'd give every cent I own if I could put my two eyes on her again, safe and sound. We found her letter—telling us about the Ward place. Her mother and I set out the very next morning, determined to get her home again, and put a stop to such nonsense.' "

Father Pat chuckled.

"Cecilia Mary said the mother would do just that very thing," he said. "Just that very thing."

Basil continued his tale, quite as though Father Pat had not spoken.

" 'But she wasn't there—my God—she wasn't there! And it's a week and nobody knows where she's gone to!' He held his head in his hands as if he were going crazy.

" 'Mr. Emory,' I said, 'do you mean to tell me that Miss Cecil did not want to marry Malcolm Travers?'



“ ‘No, she didn’t. She didn’t care for him—but then, there was no one else, and it meant a lot to her mother—a lot.’ He groaned. ‘I think I’ll go mad if I don’t get my little girl back.’

“ ‘Perhaps she would come back if you let her alone,’ I said.

“ ‘Let her alone? As long as I live no one shall ever say one word to her or try to make her do anything against her will.’

“ ‘And then, Father Pat, I told him about you.’”

Father Pat’s blue eyes were fastened on the speaker.

“That nearly finished him. ‘God forgive me,’ he said. And then he begged of me to come out with him. Nothing would do him but that she *had* come here. He clung to the hope; telephoned to Mrs. Emory and implored me to see them through. I made what arrangements I could with my people, postponed a few business engagements, and started. I inquired at the information desk, and although the man remembered a girl going to Bent River, he said she had a little boy with her. That made us doubtful, and it was not until we reached Bent River itself that we heard anything at all definite. Then the old chap told us about Father Pat’s girl. And now I’ll go back again to Startin’s to ease their minds.”



"Um," said Father Pat, a little grimly. "I'll be easing mine, too, when I get my eyes on Tommy. Did you have a pleasant journey down with the two of them?"

"Oh, Mr. Emory isn't so bad—"

"You needn't say any more, Basil. Good-night, lad—it's all hours, and poor Old Erin hasn't had her supper yet. God bless ye and make ye a better Catholic if my little Cecilia Mary is going to return any part of your affection."

"There's no hope of that, Father," said Basil Torrens. "I don't think she'd look at me twice—unless, maybe, you—"

"Um," said Father Pat. "Not I! That's just what she got away from, Basil!"

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GREAT WEST

CECILIA was in time for confession at Silver Lode next morning, and received Our Lord in holy communion. She was filled with rapture. Never had more sincere prayers winged their way to heaven from that little chapel than were hers. Curious glances were bent upon her; she did not see them. She saw nothing, but, with bent head, was wrapped in the ecstasy of assisting at mass on the mountain-top, as it were, the Holy Sacrifice being offered by one in whose veins flowed her own blood. Her cup of bliss was so full that she had no thought of past or future—only the joyful present.

Nora and Michael stayed close beside her—a few hurried words from Father Pat kept them there. He wanted to be present during whatever ordeal there might be for Cecilia in meeting her parents, and as the Emorys and Basil Torrens stayed in the rear of the chapel, Cecil was not aware of their presence until mass was over. Father Pat was still at his thanksgiving when she rose from her knees and with Nora and Michael still acting as bodyguards went out on to the trail. Curious glances sought them. There were about ten more present—among them

Mrs. Miller and her daughters, and they came over to speak to her, Michael introducing them.

It was then that Cecilia's eyes rested on the group of three. She turned quickly from the Millers and her face went so ghastly that Basil Torrens was at her side in an instant, his hand on her arm. Then her father kissed her and held her close, and her mother, taking her face between her palms, kissed her also.

"Well, Cecil!" It was her father's voice, husky, shaking. "Are you glad we came after you?"

Cecil's eyes sought her mother's face.

"*Am* I glad, Mother?" she asked.

Her mother made a gesture of resignation.

"Whatever you want, you shall have, Cecil."

"That's a rash promise!" It was Father Pat this time, snowy-haired, weather-beaten, blue-eyed Father Pat. He stood among them—his keen glance seeking his brother's wife, and then resting on his brother's face questioningly. "Well, Tommy?"

They did not even clasp hands—just stood and stared. The world had treated Tom Emory very well. He was the picture of a well-dressed, efficient, clever, comfortable business man. He had the air of prosperity. His linen was spotless, his clothing cut according to the latest fashion, his fingers smooth and white, his teeth flawless. Father Pat! Dingy of garb, with seams showing white through the cloth,

wrinkles and lines in his face, gnarled of fingers, worn under the heat of his long day of sacrifice. But as he looked at his brother Tom there was something in his air that said, "I am the O'Flaherty!" and Tom Emory acknowledged it. He extended his hand.

"Pat," he said, very humbly, "will you forgive me all these years of neglect and carelessness, and be friends with me?"

"Tommy," said his brother, "I'm friends with every man, and why should I refuse friendship to my own? A Cecilia Mary brought us two into the world and another Cecilia Mary has brought us together from the ends of the world. Doubtless the little girl and you will have much to talk about, so I'll be going on."

"Oh, no, no! No, Pat!" protested Tom Emory. "I need—"

"I've a long ride before me, Tommy. I've got to say another mass at Deer Creek. But I'll drive on to Winnereka Ranch and find out how the sick man is doing," he added to Cecil.

"When will you be back?" asked Tom Emory regretfully.

"By nightfall, surely," said Father Pat. Cecil watched him go, her heart in her eyes, and when she turned back, her mother was staring at her. This was little Cecil—poor little Cecil! She had taken



her life into her own hands! Under all that placidity and meekness there was steel and fire! What if, some day, Cecilia had turned upon her and accused her of a selfishness that had ruined the lives of her children?

Only a passing thought, this. Mrs. Emory might change, but not completely. She was the wife of Tom Emory, the millionaire, and her daughter-in-law was Muriel Carter. This one fact solaced her for her disappointment in Cecil.

"It is needless to say that you caused us a great deal of anxiety," she said. They were in the Emory's room at Startin's, and Michael, Nora and John had gone home along the trail. "It was very well done. How did you come to make your plans to go one place, and then set out for another of which we had never heard?"

Cecil's face was grave.

"Oh, I didn't plan that at all," she said. "I really meant to go to Renie's."

"We went to Miss Ward's after you."

"Yes? I imagined you would—to show me the error of my ways."

Mrs. Emory straightened a little.

"That tone, Cecil—"

"Never mind, Mother. Is it not true?"

The girl's coolness startled her.

"Is it not true?" she persisted.

"Well...we meant to show you—"

"Exactly. I knew it. I knew it when I made my plans to go, and if I had felt then as I had always felt toward you, I might possibly have returned, and even have walked to the altar with Malcolm Travers and there disgraced you forever by refusing to marry him." The girl shrugged her shoulders. "I don't blame you, Mother. All this has been my fault, and I apologize to you for it."

"You apologize to me, Cecil?"

"Yes, for ever allowing myself to be guided against my own wishes in so important a matter. It was all wrong—but I began it." She looked straight into her mother's eyes. "You had forgotten that the years had made me a woman, and I, being a woman, still wished to remain a child. So the fault was mine."

Her mother sat down suddenly in a creaky rocker at the window.

"This is a terrible place," she said.

"A terrible place?" Cecil looked about her. "I don't think you'll believe how Father Pat is living—unless you ride down the trail and find out. No bed—just a couch of logs, a thin mattress, no sheets, no pillow, no towels...He built the house himself. He made the three pieces of furniture. He has beans, and coffee, and stale bread for his diet, excepting now—in the summer time—he has an egg or two and

some green vegetables. And he's been living like this for twenty years. Since I've been here he's been out on at least five sick-calls, some of them keeping him on horseback ten hours at a stretch!"

Tom Emory's face was a study.

"And when you say anything to him he tells you the truth: he's only one of many."

"But we can help him, at least," said Tom Emory. "Somebody ought to do something—"

Cecil smiled.

"No," she said, "everyone is too busy telling some one else to 'be a sport,' 'take a chance'! There is no time for the Father Pats of this world." She sighed, and her eyes suddenly blazed as she turned on her three listeners. "I never woke up," she said, and her tones vibrated with feeling, "until I came here. I played the silly game and would probably have played it to the end. If Mother Philippa had advised me to go on...I would have gone on...and then, if I woke up, ever, it would have been too late. You can't walk straight on a crooked road, she told me, just as you can't give yourself to God unless you want God with all your heart and strength. You can't promise to love and honor when there is no love and no honor."

Mrs. Emory's eyes, large, dark, thoughtful, were fastened on her. Her father's were half-shut. And Basil Torrens was glad, as if he read beneath the



surface and found something which gave him great joy.

"I'm never going back to our sort of life," she ended.

Mrs. Emory sat up at that, with a gesture of dismay.

"Oh, I don't mean I am not going home with you—I don't mean that. But I'm through. I won't go back to the social circle Colin and Muriel love—and you, too, Mother. I want you to realize that the girl who was a coward—and who yet had enough spirit to take the only way out though it was the coward's way—is gone forever. In these few days with Father Pat, I've seen more kindness, devotion, sincerity, than I've ever seen since I left the convent."

"Now, Cecil, don't try to be romantic," said her mother, rather crisply. "You are exaggerating because you have experienced hardship for the first time—"

"Father!" Cecil held out her two hands. "I could never endure that again, never. I cannot go back to it. You must compel my mother—"

"Compel," repeated Mrs. Emory, with suddenly flashing eyes. But Tom Emory drew his daughter close to his heart.

"Cecil is right, Elizabeth. I looked into Father



Pat's face today, and Pat, penniless, shamed me. We've been fishing in a shallow pool, my girl."

"Yes," said Cecil, "with a lot of little minnows. Let's get out of it, where we belong."

"You're right, honey, you're right," said Tom Emory.

There was anger on Mrs. Emory's face, but Basil Torrens put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't, Mrs. Emory," he said gently. "Just think—if Miss Cecil had not been here! You have something to be thankful for."

The pressure of his hand, the note of warning, conquered her.

"I don't want to say anything unpleasant," she said. "And Cecil, I have told you you were to do exactly as you pleased hereafter."

"And there is a rumor, since old Harriet Joyce's death, that Malcolm Travers has been singeing his wings at another candle," supplemented Tom Emory.

"Oh, good! Good!" said Cecil. "Those two belong together. He doesn't want me, and I don't want him."

"Cecil," said Tom Emory, "how did you get that engagement ring into his pocket?"

"I put it there myself—I met him and Miss Moore on the avenue the day I came out here—and slipped it into his coat-pocket then. It never belonged to me, anyhow."

"There ought to be some breakfast ready now," said Basil Torrens. "We mustn't expect too much from Startin's, but at least it's food. And there will be horses ready for us as soon as we want them."

"Horses?" asked Mrs. Emory, blankly.

"Why, don't you want to see the shack?" asked Cecil. "Now that you've got this far, Mother, don't you want to see how Uncle Pat lives?"

Mrs. Emory shook her head.

"Not if I have to go on horseback to get there," she said. "Besides, I'd rather lie on that bed and rest while I can. We'll get out of this place tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning!" Cecil echoed the words almost in dismay.

"Yes," said Mrs. Emory, firmly. "Tonight, if there was a train. I've made all inquiries. There are no trains going or coming on Sundays and the first train out leaves Bent River at ten-thirty in the morning. We're going on that." She glanced sharply at the girl. "You don't suppose we meant to visit here?"

"No," said Cecil. "No—o— But...Father hasn't seen Uncle Pat in so long—"

Mrs. Emory shrugged her shoulders, and they went down to Jim Startin's own living-room, in which he had set the table for their breakfast out of deference to Father Pat. Presently Mrs. Emory went upstairs

again, and Cecil and her father and Basil Torrens took the trail to Father Pat's log cabin. They reached it in due time, but Cecilia's face was shadowed, and finally, when Michael and Nora were entertaining Father Pat's brother—and when did two Connemara men ever get together without finding plenty to talk about?—Cecil and Basil Torrens went on up to the top of the crag which the girl had named Rosary Mountain.

"You do not look very cheerful, Miss Cecil," said Basil Torrens.

"No," said Cecil, "and I'm not. I don't want to go home tomorrow."

"But," said Basil Torrens, "you know your mother can't stay at Startin's—the accommodations there are—"

"But I got used to Father Pat's place—and what are the accommodations there? Besides, Father hasn't seen his own brother for so long, and I'm so anxious that they should talk over—everything. You know what money means to Father Pat out here."

"He got along without it so far," said Basil Torrens, "and I don't know if he'd thank you for it."

Cecil put her hand over his suddenly.

"I must be grateful to you for all that I have learned," she said. "You brought Father Pat to me—you gave me the refuge that saved me. I am



really changed. If you only knew how silly I was—before this. But now I am a woman.”

He looked at her, and at the expression on his face her glance fell.

“Cecil,” he said, “when I saw you last I had no right to speak to you. I have the right now. Will you listen?”

She nodded, her breath coming more quickly.

“My future life lies for the most part out here,” he said. “I’ve cast my lot with the West. My work is here—oh, not at Silver Lode, exactly—but sometimes within easy reach of it. Big things are being planned for the future—and Cecil—is it possible—dare I hope—that you will share them with me?”

“But I go home tomorrow,” she said.

“I have to go as well. I left all ends loose to come out here in search of you. Cecil, I should never have given up the search—never. We shall go home tomorrow—together. And we shall come back—together.”

Cecil looked down at the hands that held her own.

“You might—just by accident, perhaps?—tell me you rather like me?” . . .

It was four o’clock when Father Pat reached home, but he was not alone. The owner of Winnereka Ranch came with him, and when Cecilia saw him she sprang to meet him, with a spontaneous joy she had not shown her father. Senator Hayden held her close, and his eyes were misty.



"Well, Cecil, you did it after all, didn't you? But why didn't you let me know that day and we could have eloped together? To think of you finding your way out here, dear child, almost within a stone's throw of me, and I not to know it."

He greeted Tom Emory jovially.

"Couldn't you put up at Winnereka for a short while," he asked, "you and Elizabeth?"

"I'm afraid she's—rather set her mind on going tomorrow," said Tom Emory. "And Torrens *must* go."

"Well, then," said Father Pat, cheerfully, "we'll make the best of what we've got."

And so the conversation began. Bit by bit, Tom Emory went back over the years—his trials, his ambitions, his successes—in which recital Senator Hayden could take an active part. And then Father Pat told of his struggles after Tom had emigrated, his effort to continue his studies, the death of his brothers and sister, one by one, and then the mother; how word had come of Tom's accidental death in the railroad yards, ("I was hurt," said Tom, "and I never went back there.") then of his ordination and of his coming to the United States, being loaned to the Bishop for work in Nevada, and his subsequent adoption into the diocese. And after that the years of service spent among "the best people in the world, God bless them—always willing to share their last bite with you." And then the overwhelming surprise

of Cecil's letter—and her just as overwhelming arrival.

“Nor did she come without purpose,” said Father Pat. “And you’ll believe that when I tell you something more. This Joyce Moore you speak about—I’m interested in her.”

Senator Hayden moved uneasily—opened his lips to speak, shut them again.

“What was her aunt’s name?”

“Her aunt’s name was Harriet Joyce. She died recently.”

“Um. Is that all you know about her?”

Tom Emory looked puzzled. Senator Hayden placed his hand on the priest’s arm.

“I know Jack Bidwell’s right name,” he said.

“Yes, poor fellow. He’s dead and buried.”

“Dead and buried!” Senator Hayden looked startled.

“Yes—and he was John Moore—Joyce Moore’s father. And that little boy John, out there playing with my Old Erin, is the son of his second wife.”

They stared at him.

“That’s a strange thing,” said Basil Torrens. “How did you find it out?”

“By the papers Jack Bidwell left when he made me guardian of his boy.”

“Wait,” said Senator Hayden. “I think I can

make things a little clearer and show you why I was so interested in Joyce and Malcolm. In the first place Harriet Joyce's lover jilted her for another woman, and though it happened when she was a girl of eighteen, her hatred of men thereafter amounted to a mania. Her sister Margaret, who was, by their father's will, made almost dependent on Harriet, married in defiance of her, and she never stopped bickering, fault-finding, persecuting, until she succeeded in parting husband and wife. John Moore, most unfortunately, had a loose streak in him, and he went off with all Miss Harriet's jewels and a lot of negotiable paper that he was able to turn into cash before the loss was discovered—thirty thousand dollars would hardly cover the theft. Harriet had him shadowed by detectives and brought back to her. Then on condition that he make a statement confessing his crime and sign it, she let him go free.

"Unfortunately, she held this confession as a club over poor Margaret's head. Margaret always blamed herself for John's misdoing, and when she died she made Joyce swear to protect her father whenever or wherever possible. There you have it. Joyce was an innocent victim, and the reason she was a slave to that old woman was because she had threatened, in event of Joyce's rebellion or leaving her, to use this confession, bring John Moore back to stand the penalty and send him to prison. It was she who also parted Joyce and Malcolm. The moment a man



looked at the girl this envenomed old creature went crazy."

There were tears in Cecil's eyes.

"Now I know why I always liked her," she said.

"With her aunt's death she will probably be a wealthy as well as a free woman."

"That means," said Tom Emory, "since little John is her brother, that you'll have to be coming East to settle affairs, Pat."

"Faith, then," said Father Pat, with a twinkle in his eye, "the papers are here, sound and safe, and they have only to do with my boy out there. If the father wanted Joyce Moore's finger in it he would have said so, and if there's any settling to be done Miss Moore will come West to do it. I wouldn't leave this little place of mine, and take any chance of not being here when a soul wants me for aught like that, Tom. Not unless the Bishop orders me out, and I don't think he will. Here I am and here I'll stay—and ye're all welcome to come and stay, too. But I'm not going—no, not even for an hour."

"Let Malcolm and Joyce make it on their wedding trip," said Cecil. "I'll tell her so—when I go back.  
. . ."

Mrs. Emory declined to visit Senator Hayden's ranch—although at the urgent solicitation of both Senator Hayden and Father Pat she consented to allow Cecilia to do so, adding, a little ungraciously, perhaps, that Cecilia would go anyhow, if she wanted



to very badly. Cecilia was in no hurry to leave Father Pat. Her father and mother and her now avowed lover left on the ten-thirty train, but Cecil returned to the shack and together they walked to the cliff, and there Cecil told her uncle what she had named it.

"You've been an angel of light, Cecilia Mary," said Father Pat gently. "Let's look long at the sunset, my dear. You won't see another like it—not even at Winnereka."

"I don't expect to, ever," she said, soberly.

"Sometimes, little child with my mother's eyes, you'll think of me and pray for me? And maybe... a couple of years from now—you'll come back?"

She looked up mischievously.

"Basil has taken a big contract for this part of the country," she said, "and—I'm thinking of taking him and the contract, too, Father Pat—just to be near you."

"Glory be!" said Father Pat. "Well," he sighed, "if you'd been living when Napoleon crossed the Alps he'd have trotted back home in a hurry. When... did you say...Cecil?"

She looked at him innocently.

"I didn't say, Father Pat. I left that for Basil to decide."

"Um," said Father Pat. "And may I ask what you have decided Basil shall decide?"

But Cecilia only laughed.









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